

PLAYBOY

PHILIPPINES

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

2018 Playmate of the Year

HOLIDAY
GIFT GUIDE

MISS SOCIAL
JANINE RIVERA

PEOPLE'S CHOICE
ROB GUINTO

INTERVIEW
MICHAEL SHANNON

20Q
SOFIA BOUTELLA

PICTORIALS
KATE GONZALES
ARA PARAISO
KRISTINE PERALTA
ANTHEA PAGE



Maine
Eugenio

18+

ISSN 2012-0281



9 772012 028006

PHP 199.00

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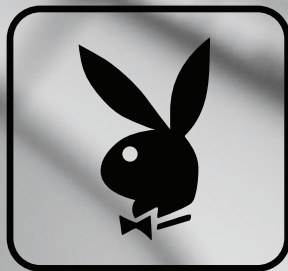
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the dust has finally settled; the smoke cleared.

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YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.





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OUR COVER



ISSUE NO. 89

PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

COVER GIRL: MAINE EUGENIO

PHOTOGRAPHED BY OWEN REYES

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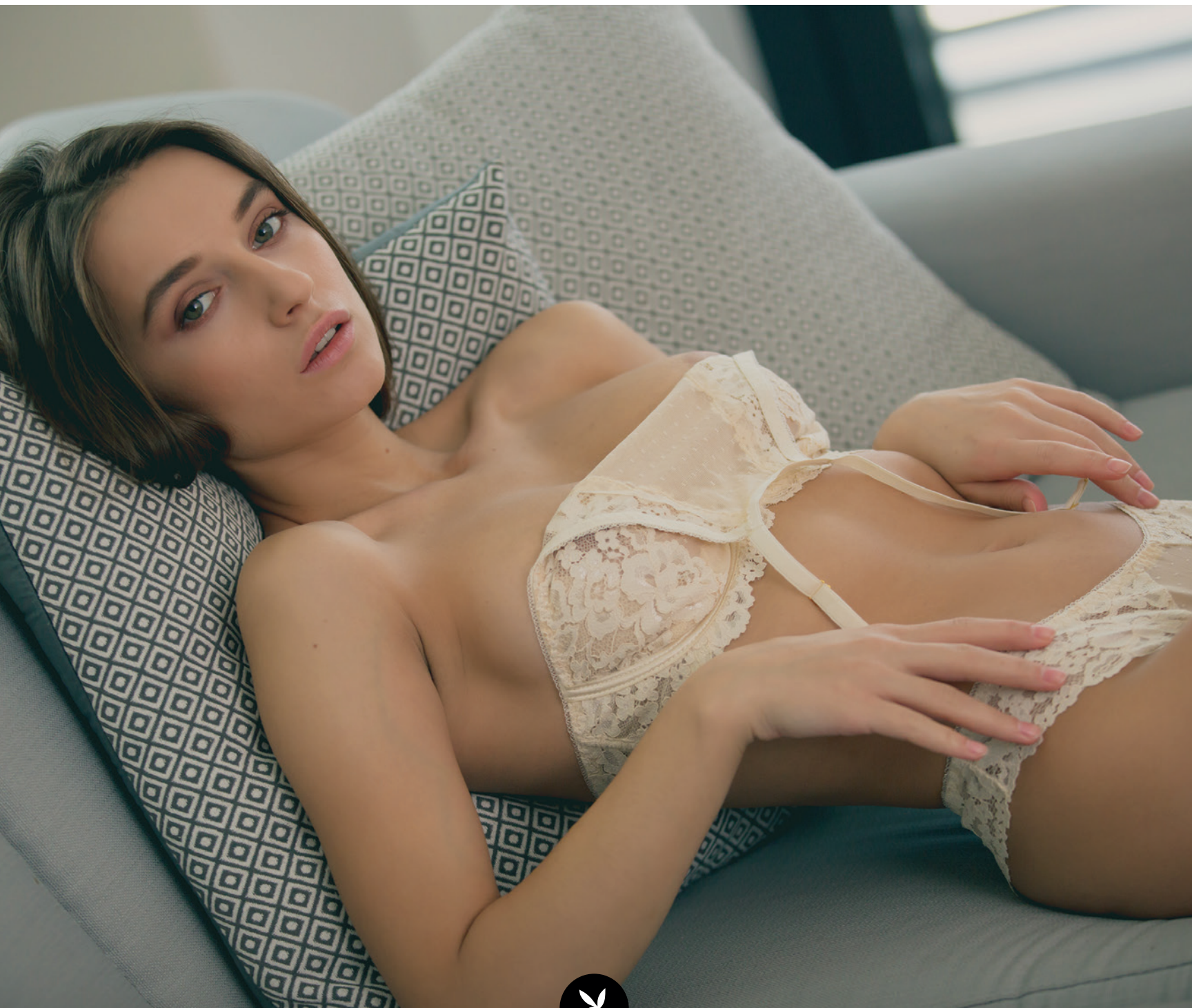
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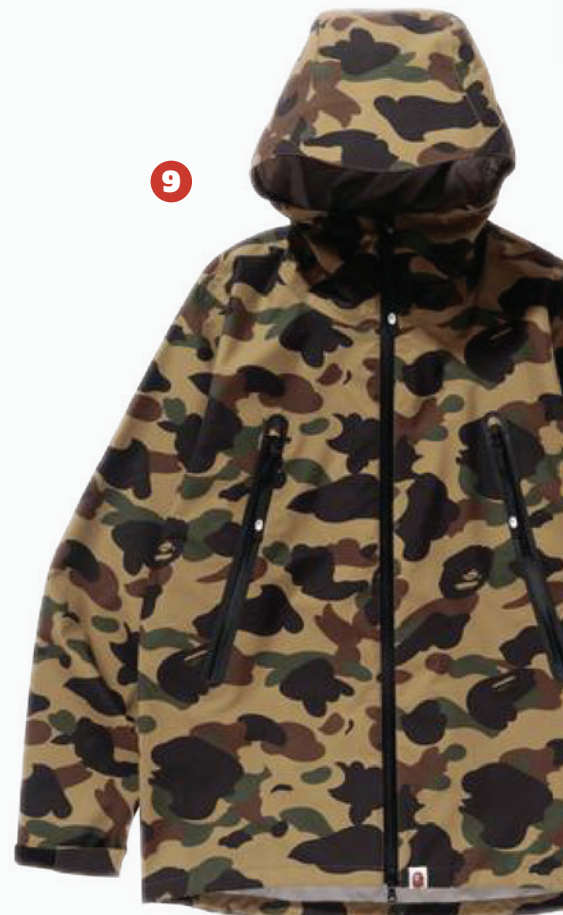
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PLAYGROUND

PLAYBOY

Holiday **GIFT GUIDE** **2018**

CHESTNUTS WON'T BE THE ONLY THINGS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE
WITH ALL THE HOTTEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT IDEAS FROM THIS SIDE
OF TOWN THAT WE HAVE DULY COMPILED. ANYONE WHO RECEIVES THESE
GIFTS WILL BE PROCLAIMING THEIR JOY TO THE WORLD.



1 COATED WITH CLASS

A ribbed jacket not only makes you feel toasty; your style game will also be on point in Christmas parties and social functions during the holidays. Uniqlo Extra Fine Merino Milano Ribbed Jacket. **P3,990.** Uniqlo.com

2 IN RHYTHM

Share your Spotify playlist with the audience it deserves by rigging your phone with a top notch Bluetooth speaker. This sound box from Zilla Tank Rock features four hours of playtime and is waterproof. Zilla Tank Rock Bluetooth Speaker. **P899.**

3 ALL PLANNED OUT

Any action, as the old adage goes, comes with an equal reaction. And in the case of your best-made plans written on a finely-made planner, you will certainly react by acting upon them. Moleskine 12M Limited Edition Harry Potter Weekly Notebook. **P1,295.** Fullybookedonline.com

4 A DATE WITH THE MAD TITAN

As fans await the sequel of Infinity War, the holiday season is the ideal time to read up on the comic book with which the movie was based from. It's no surprise Infinity Gauntlet is currently one of the best-selling graphic novels on Fully Booked. Infinity Gauntlet. **P1,199.**

STYLE

5 TRACK DOWN YOUR PROGRESS

Know if your workout is truly working out for you by using the Fitbit Aria 2. The gadget monitors your BMI, weight, body fat percentage, and can recognize up to eight users. Fitbit Aria 2. **P15,600.** Fitbit.com

6 ON YOUR TOES

High-performance footwear affords users ample ankle support, flexibility, and durability that can help improve results. One such example is Reebok Speed TR Flexweave with its heavy-duty material. Reebok Speed TR Flexweave. **P4,995.** Reebok.com

7 NO SWEAT

H&M's Sports Top not only aids people who sweat excessively by drying out fast, it's textile also gives the skin some breathing space and does not restrict movement. H&M Sports Top. **P899.** Hm.com



5



7



6

10



8



8 A NEW CLASSIC

Trends in music, as with everything else, tend to repeat themselves over time. And such is the case with the modern vinyl player, which is a souped-up version of your tito's favorite audio device. Satchmi Motorino Turntable. **P8,499.** Satchmi.com/motorino

9 URBAN FLAIR

Urban junkies gain a dollop of swag the moment they put on a BAPE camouflage jacket. A Bathing Ape's quirky design adds more flavor to one's fashion sense. Bape 1st Camo Shark Hoodie Jacket. **P18,400.** Bape.com

10 CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD GAME

SSince new music and movies can be easily streamed nowadays, a worthwhile left field option is one of best new board games around, Gloomhaven. The game casts players to daunting dungeons backed with a gripping storyline. Gloomhaven. **P7,700.** Abubot.ph

11 HOPPY CHRISTMAS

IIndie kids have a penchant for things that are out of the ordinary, and Craft-point Brewing Company offers some of the country's most outrageous beer brews. Getting one of each variant is always an awesome gift idea. Craft-point Brewing Company. Facebook.com/craftpointbrewing

11



1 MARVEL THANOS GAUNTLET LAMP

While this vibey replica of the Mad Titan's ultimate weapon may not grant you the power of the infinity stones, it'll definitely add a touch of atmosphere to your pad. **(Vito Alip)**

2 LOGITECH G502 PROTEUS CORE MOUSE

Level up your pc gaming experience with a mouse that's out to give you total control. The G502 is comfortable, customizable, and has a sensor that guarantees precision. **(VA)**

3 THE ANKER POWERCORE 10000

This is a perfect gift to anyone with a phone: it's powerful enough for your techie friend (it can charge flagship phones 3 times) and light and compact enough for friends with small purses. **(Erika Sevilla)**

4 WACACO MINIPRESSO

Looking for the right gift for a jet-setting coffee snob? Check out this nifty little espresso maker! It's portable enough to hand carry or keep in a small bag while also needing absolutely no electricity to function. **(VA)**

5 MAGIC LEAP ONE MIXED REALITY HEADSET

There's still a lot of mystery about what exactly the Magic Leap can do but it was revealed to have what looks to be an interactive pet experience (think holographic tamagotchi) as well as a mixed reality musical. **(VA)**



TECH



THE ELDER SCROLLS: BLADES

Bethesda's latest installment of the Elder Scrolls franchise marks their first legitimate excursion into the realm of mobile gaming. The company promises the same "console-quality" experience that fans have come to expect from the series. **(Vito Alip)**



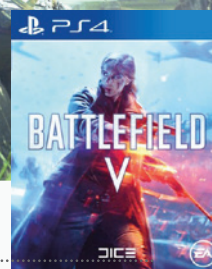
POKEMON: LET'S GO

Let's be real: you're never too old for a Pokemon game. As the first official Pokemon game for the Switch, players will be able to explore the Kanto region, train and battle with high levels of immersive experiences like never before. **(VA)**



BATTLEFIELD V

The sixteenth installment of the Battlefield series will feature plenty of multiplayer modes and will also be bringing back the single player War Stories mode last seen in Battlefield 1. **(VA)**



HITMAN 2

The Hitman series is back with more sneaky sniping and ghostly garrote-killing action. Aside from the standard single player story mode, there'll be loads of multiplayer fun as well. **(VA)**



FALLOUT 76

Bethesda makes its debut foray into the online multiplayer game arena by launching Fallout 76, an open world shooter about four times the size of Fallout 4 that features mutated monsters and survival-of-the-fittest gameplay. **(VA)**





1 H&M BIKER JACKET

Carry your devil-may-care charisma into your Christmas parties with this timeless looking faux leather jacket from H&M. Pair it with a plain tee and put the cool back into Christmas. (Vito Alip)

2 BAPE X MITCHELL & NESS X NBA

Got an NBA fan in your life? Treat them to one of these hype pieces off of BAPE x Mitchell & Ness' NBA collection! (VA)

3 ADIDAS ULTRABOOST UNCAGED PARLEY

This Christmas, get yourself something that's equal parts environmentally responsible and fly-looking. Adidas is producing this limited run of UltraBOOST sneakers made of 95% plastic found on the ocean floor. (VA)

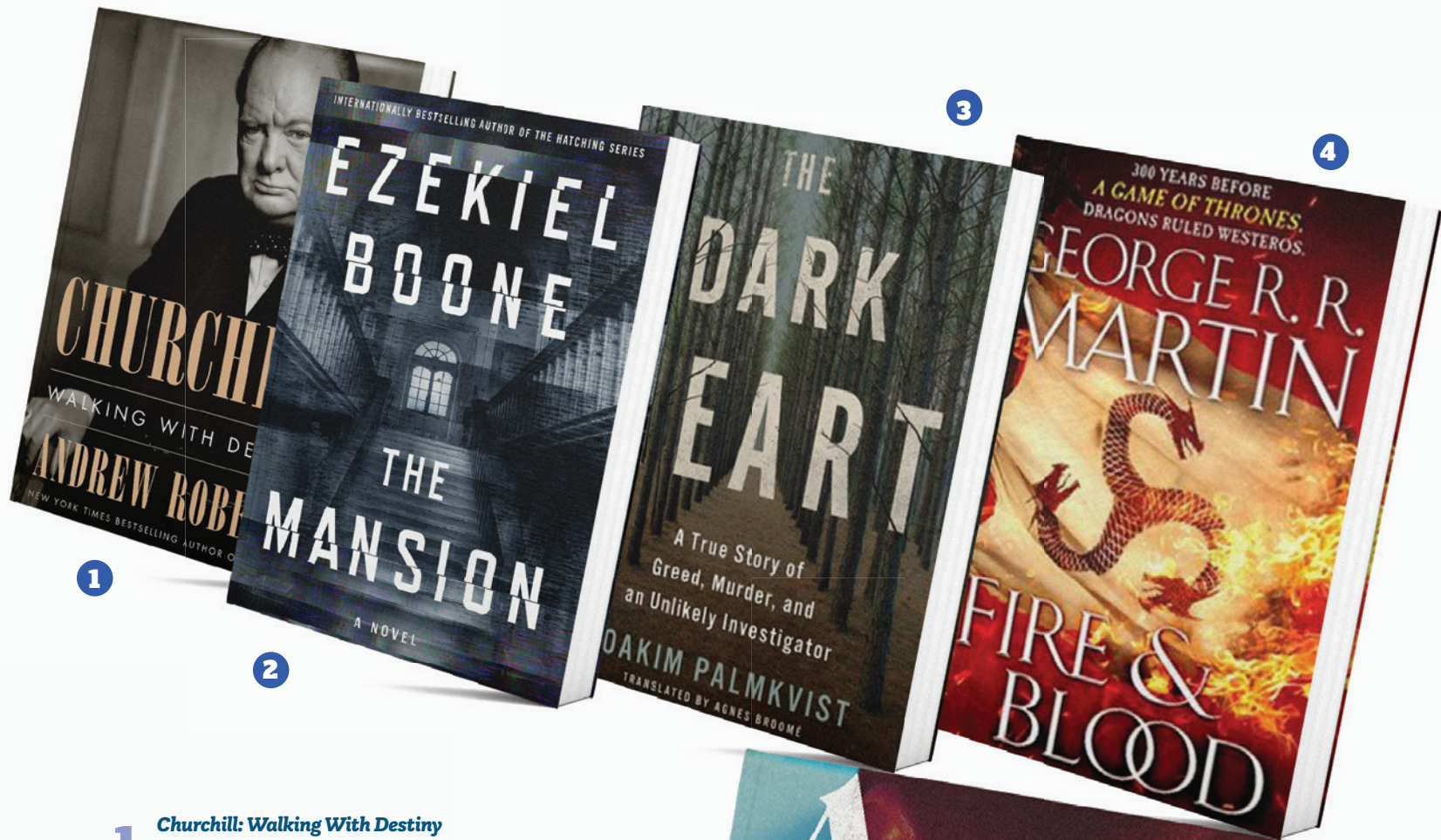
4 UNIQLO MEN U FLEECE CARDIGAN

You'll be fleeced to have this toasty looking cardigan on chilly yuletide evenings. Plus, you can get it in either beige, cream, brown, or navy. (VA)

5 LEVI'S TRUCKER JACKET

If rough and tumble are more of your thing, check out this piece from Levi's. It's rugged, versatile and classic. (VA)





1 **Churchill: Walking With Destiny** By Andrew Roberts

This biography of the great British Prime Minister who led the country through World War 2 ought to offer some perspective as to what being a true leader entails. (Vito Alip)

2 **The Mansion** By Ezekiel Boone

Sci-fi meets horror in this chilling tale of AI gone evil. Programmers Shawn Eagle and Billy Stafford have to working together once more to destroy a rogue creation of theirs. (VA)

3 **The Dark Heart: A True Story of Greed, Murder and An Unlikely Investigator** By Joakim Palmkvist

A missing millionaire, a scheming daughter, and an unlikely yet determined investigator? Off the bat, this one sounds like a compelling read especially for fans of the true crime genre. (VA)

4 **Fire & Blood** By George R.R. Martin

Set to be a prequel of sorts to the A Song of Ice and Fire, this much awaited novel will take readers through the history of Westeros from the perspective of its longtime ruling family, House Targaryen. (VA)

5 **A Ladder to the Sky** By John Boyne

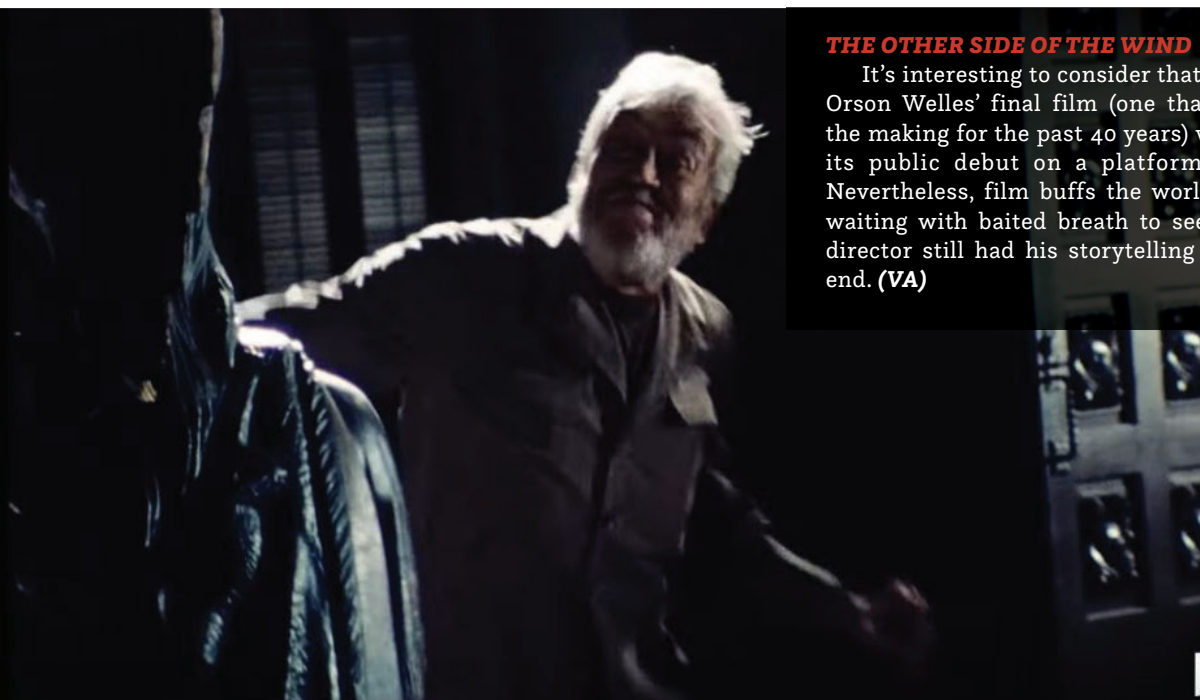
From the author of The Boy in the Striped Pajamas comes this tale of a ruthless yet charming man who's not about to let a lack of talent get in the way of his pursuit of acclaim as a writer. (VA)





BOY ERASED

Based on the autobiographical novel by Garrard Conley, the film's plot revolves around Jared Eamons, who at the age of 19, is outed as a homosexual and is given the choice of either disownment or conversion therapy. In our current world where the LGBT community fights tooth and nail everyday for respect and equality, this film offers a look into the not so distant past when homosexuality was seen as an ailment that needed to be "cured." **(Vito Alip)**



THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIND

It's interesting to consider that the legendary Orson Welles' final film (one that has been in the making for the past 40 years) will be making its public debut on a platform like Netflix. Nevertheless, film buffs the world over will be waiting with baited breath to see if the iconic director still had his storytelling magic till the end. **(VA)**

NETFLIX



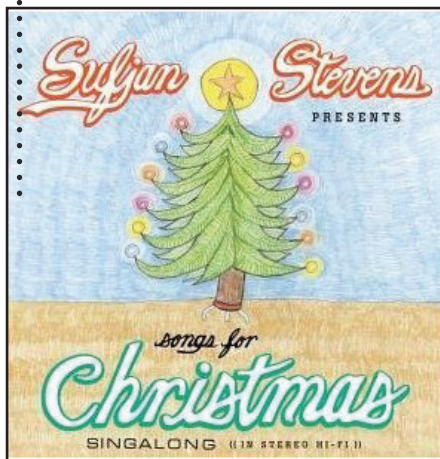
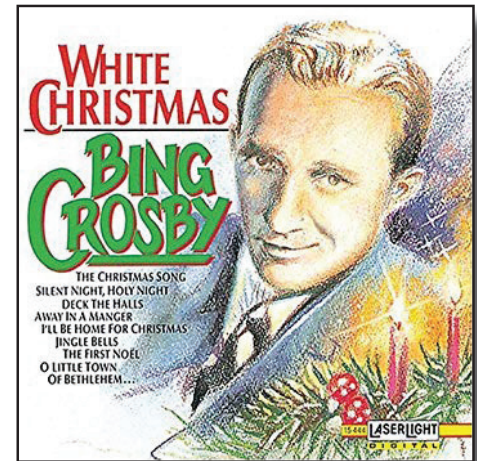
VICE

This Brad Pitt-produced piece starring names like Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Steve Carell and Sam Rockwell is sure to draw a healthy audience based on star power alone. Opening on Christmas Day in the US, the film intends to chronicle the meteoric rise to power of former American Vice-President Dick Cheney. **(VA)**

SLEIGH BELLS RING: ARE YOU LISTENING TO THESE WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS ALBUMS?

Disdain, sarcasm, and resentment may be fashionable song themes these days, but when you start to see boys and girls selling lanterns on the street, they take a backseat to the cheerfulness induced by Christmas carols. And as such, I've come up with a roster of quintessential Christmas albums that are as festive as a serving of fatty Chinese ham.

When it comes to Christmas songs, I like the sleigh bell foley, glockenspiel intros, and 7th chords, thank you very much. What you may expect to find on this list are a bunch of albums that exhibit timeless quality or expand the definition of Christmas music. Like I always say, in a nuclear apocalypse, two things will survive: a hardened race of cockroaches and an untarnished cassette tape of Jose Mari Chan's Christmas in Our Hearts. The following albums could make it to that list as well.





STOVE-TOP PORK POT ROAST

BY **IDA SALANGSANG**

In a sea of holiday staples largely dominated by Chinese ham, pandesal, queso de bola, and your mom's fruit salad comes a traditional dish often prepared on Western dinner tables during holiday feasts and other special occasions - a sinful treat that the Filipino palate would surely appreciate. The Stove-top Pork Pot Roast features savory slices of butter-soft pork drenched in lightly herbed mushroom gravy that go lusciously well with either rice or rolls. It can give Christmas ham a run for the money and its spot in the noche buena spread.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg pork shoulder, whole
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 1 teaspoon sage
- ¼ cup unsalted butter
- 16 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour, or as needed
- 1 beef bouillon cube



FOOD

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rub the pork all over with thyme, sage, and salt and pepper.

2. Heat a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add oil to pan and sear the pork on all sides. Remove meat from pot and sauté the onion and garlic. Put the seared pork back in the pot and add water. Reduce heat to medium or medium-low, cover, then let it simmer until the meat is forked tender, which should be around 2 hours. Turn the meat occasionally as water evaporates and then add a little more water to prepare the broth (4 cups). Drain the roast and keep the broth for later.

3. To make the gravy, heat the butter over medium heat in a saucepan until it foams. Stir in mushrooms and lightly season with salt. Simmer

until the liquid evaporates (around 20 minutes).

4. Mix in the flour, then cook and stir the mixture for about 5 minutes. Pour in 1 cup of the broth (pork stock) – stirring the mixture briskly until incorporated – then add the remaining stock. Mix thoroughly.

5. Add the beef bouillon cube to the mixture and stir well until the cube is completely dissolved. Season with black pepper and thyme. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until thickened (around 30 minutes) while stirring the gravy often.

6. To Serve: Carefully carve the pork roast into ¼-inch thick cuts and arrange the slices on a serving platter. Pour a generous amount of mushroom gravy over.



BUTTERBEER:

A MAGICAL DRINK FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

In 1997, when JK Rowling first published a book about a boy with a funny shaped scar, little did she know that she would be inducting into the world more than just a literary phenomenon; she would introduce to the masses a multitude of ideas that have entrenched themselves firmly into mass consciousness.

One of those things is the beloved Butterbeer, introduced in Harry's later years as the wizard's poison of choice. While not intended to be a holiday beverage in the young wizard's tale, the muggle world has taken to identifying the drink with the Yuletide season as it is a treat intended for merriment and celebration.

Although numerous establishments have taken their own spin on the Wizarding World's venerated beverage, few are quite as gratifying as making your own in the comforts of home. The drink's flavor profile also affords you a window to explore and, say, add an alcoholic twist to it, which is exactly what we did. Our featured recipe offers the drink's characteristic amber hue and frothy, foamy top while packing the flavor of butterscotch and light beer that we've all come to know and love – minus the amusement park lines. **(Ida Salangsang)**

INGREDIENTS

- 90 ml butterscotch syrup
- 45 ml Bacardi Gold
- 1 can of soda water
- Crushed ice
- Whipped cream for topping

INSTRUCTION

1. Pour all the ingredients in a stirring glass (except soda water and whipped cream).
2. Add crushed ice while stirring it gently.
3. Strain the mixture to draw off any undesirable particles and then ladle it gently into a pilsner glass.
4. Pour the soda water.
5. Top it with whipped cream.
6. Serve and enjoy!



RECIPE BY CYR LOUIE FRIGILLANO





NOTABLE CHRISTMAS BAZAARS TO VISIT

The spirit of Christmas is one of giving, which is why Filipinos have a habit of extending their retail therapy to loved ones during the holiday season. Shopping malls may hold Christmas sales and attract hordes of shoppers, but at the end of the day, heading to a Christmas bazaar has become a time-old tradition for many a Filipino family. Greenhills was once the primary destination for Christmas shopping. Now Pinoy shoppers have a plethora of options.

NOEL BAZAAR

The Noel Bazaar is one of the most popular and longest-running Christmas conventions in the country. For 18 years, it has been affording shoppers a wide array of food and dry goods coupled with celebrity appearances and fun activities for the family. On its 18th installment, there will be a flock of Kapuso stars on hand to sell their wares on top of musical performances from known bands, fashion shows, and cooking demonstrations.

Catch the Noel Bazaar at the World Trade Center from November 15 to 30; Filinvest Tent in Alabang from November 29 to December 23; and SMX Convention Center Manila from December 14 to 23.

WORLD BAZAAR FESTIVAL

Rivaling the Noel Bazaar in popularity and magnitude, the World Bazaar Festival is a huge event that regularly attracts hundreds of vendors and thousands of Christmas shoppers. Its latest incarnation will be graced by Kapamilya stars and a roster of about 600 vendors. You will have more than what you bargained as the bazaar has a wide selection of novelty items, fashion items, and lifestyle products on offer.

Catch the World Bazaar Festival at the World Trade Center from December 12 to 22.

GREENHILLS BAZAAR

There's a bazaar all year round at the Greenhills Shopping Center, and every Christmas the property takes things up a notch. From decorative trains that run

across the area to the Belen lodged in front of the event grounds, this bazaar has become synonymous to the holiday season for a lot of families. Here you will find a wide selection of cheap goods and food items, ideal for those who are doing their Christmas shopping on a budget.

CHRISTMAS TOYCON

Can't find enough toys to give the kids and kids-at-heart this Christmas? There is a bazaar in the metro that centers on cool toys from the latest Funko Pop toys to a selection of manga and comics. The Christmas Toys and Collectibles Fair, fondly known as Christmas Toycon, is specifically tailored for geeks and hobbyists, so prepare to invest on a haul of goods for all your fandoms.

Catch the Christmas Toycon at SM Megamall from December 14 to 16.

ZONTA CHRISTMAS CARNIVALE BAZAAR

Organized by the Zonta Club of Alabang, the Zonta Christmas Carnivale Bazaar is a melting pot of classy goods for people of all ages. Having a carnival theme, which is a hit with the kids and those who have a penchant for taking selfies, the bazaar has over 250 vendors in its roster and the proceeds will go to the various charity projects of the club. So in attending the convention, it will be all about giving Christmas presents to the family and to the less fortunate.

Catch the Zonta Christmas Carnivale Bazaar at The Filinvest Tent from November 23 to 25.
(Paul Wenceslao)



ADVISOR

ONE OF MY FEMALE FRIENDS WAS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?



Q: *I just found out that one of my close female friends was sexually assaulted by someone she'd been casually dating for the last few months. She told our gang about it via our group chat, which I wasn't able to check until recently. I only heard about it because another friend texted me about what happened and was talking about castrating the guy. I managed to convince him that getting himself arrested probably won't help our friend, but I totally get where he's coming from. I'm shocked and angered by what had happened to her, and I want to make sure that that guy never touches her again. But I also don't know if that's the right thing to do. Heck, I don't even know what I can do to help her. I'm a man, and a man did this to her. I haven't spoken to her about this, because I don't know what to say. But I know I have to do something. How do I help my friend?*

A: What had happened to your friend is terrible, and it's perfectly normal for you to feel angry at the offender—it's perfectly normal for your guy friend to want to hurt him too. That said, your instinct to not give in to more violent impulses is absolutely on point. You know why?

It makes the sexual assault about you and your feelings, when it should always be about your female friend and what she really needs from you.

And what she needs from you is your emotional support, not the crippling fear that #yesallmen solve everything through brutality and your actions will result in some form of retaliation from her attacker. She might even think you may turn that rage on her one day; I'm sure you wouldn't actually do that, but it won't matter. If she thinks you're capable of it—after the extremely traumatic experience she's been through, she very likely will—she'll be afraid to trust you. Then you won't be able to help her at all.

So good for you. You've managed to rein that anger in. But that's only the beginning.

Once you've gotten your own feelings about the issue in check, you can listen to her. And when I say listen to her, I mean really listen to her.

This means you don't bring up the assault the next time you talk to her. Let her choose when she wants to talk to you about it.

This means you don't press her for details. Let her tell you what she wants you to know, and for god's sake don't make her relive the ordeal.

This means you don't tell her what she should have done, or what she should do. Let her know that you believe her, that it's not her fault, and that you're there to help her out with her next steps—if she wants to take the next steps at all.

Sexual assault is a crime and your friend can most definitely press charges against the offender. In fact, survivors of assault are encouraged to do so. However, it's still up to her. Be as supportive as you can, whatever her decision. If she opens the window to you on what she should do, in case she has no idea on how to proceed, that's the time when you can present her with options.

The most important thing you have to remember about sexual assault is that it's less about wanting sex and more about taking power and control away from someone else. People who have been attacked in this way often feel impotent and ashamed. They need friends like you to help them feel like they are still worthy of respect, and that they still have power.

Listening to your friend will not only help alleviate her burden; it'll help you figure out other ways by which you can offer her support on her own terms.

Lastly, I understand that this can be draining for you, too—while you weren't the one who got assaulted, knowing that someone you care about was can also be very distressing. As I mentioned earlier, it's perfectly normal for you to have a lot of your own feelings of guilt over this situation (you should have been there to protect her, you don't know what to do, you should have seen this coming, etc.). So it's just as important for you to have your OWN support system to help you cope. Remember, helpers need help too.

BY **ELEA ALMAZORA**

In case your friend decides that she needs help and wants to press charges, here are a few numbers she can call:

- Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) - (02) 931-8101 to 07
- PNP-Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) - (02) 410-3213
- NBI-Violence Against Women and Children Desk (VAWCD) - (02) 523-8231 to 38 or (02) 525-6028 📞

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FORUM

Club walks free after 15 years in jail

kababae mon9 tao
pa-shot shot ka?

So you got drunk at a party and two people
take advantage of you, that's not rape you're
just a loose drunk slut

kababae mon9 tao
pa-shot shot ka?

kababae mon9 tao
pa-shot shot ka?

ky Gervais

...priorities, make it harder for hackers to
steal nude pics of you from your computer
by not putting nude pics of yourself on
your computer.

REPLY 1,359
REPLY 1,611

however it is our responsibility as
women to dress modestly and be
classy. dressing in a provocative/
sexual way entices the wrong crowd.

The girl asked for it and wanted it, in my
opinion. They gave it to her. No crime.
Appeal!

ASKING FOR IT

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT VICTIM BLAMING

BY SALOME SALVI



Ifrequently wonder why victim blaming is a normal response to some crimes, but is completely unacceptable to others. When a murder occurs, we clamor for justice. We think of murderers as animals; enslaved by their uncontrollable urge for violence. They represent the worst of humanity.

On the other hand, we think of victims of mugging and sexual harassment as weak and careless; their plight brought upon by their naiveté. How stupid of them to show off the goods while walking into a trap they already know to be there, we say.

While taking a life is irreversible and unthinkable grave, we have to ask ourselves: is there really a difference between the inhumanities that spur these crimes?

Rape survivors may answer no. It may be hard to fathom, but as a survivor of rape myself, I can tell you with confidence: having my life sapped from my years of post-rape trauma may be as close to dying as I can get without being murdered. The callousness with which our rapists consider our future is akin to the disregard that

they have towards white cisgender males is very much alive: it is as real as the pay gap and the higher employment and literacy rates of men. It is as real as the fact that despite rapists being 94 percent male, less than 7 percent of them are convicted for their crimes. If we are to address victim-blaming towards sexual harassment survivors, we have to acknowledge gender inequality.

Our patriarchal culture is what imbues the mostly-male population of sexual harassers the sense of entitlement they have over their mostly-female victims. This entitlement comes into play in the power dynamics of sexual harassment, which we have to understand to not be about sexual or physical attraction. Rather, sexual harassment is the assertion of power.

When a man catcalls a woman on the street or slides into a woman's DMs to demand nudes after seeing a cute picture of her on Instagram, we have to look not at why he found her attractive, but why he thought doing those things is acceptable. It is because he is enculturated to think that "boys will be boys"; it is his right to flaunt

their exposé. Joseph Scott Pemberton would have been instantly convicted. The accusations against Bill Cosby wouldn't have been initially dismissed as conspired assassinations of his character. We would have listened to the victims of these cases more immediately and intently. These cases shouldn't be treated as isolated; they are symptoms of a system that continually oppresses women.

Those who are skeptical of the legitimacy of rape culture often pull a few cards:

"What about the public image and mental health of those accused of sexual harassment?"

"Women ought to be more careful."

"What about male victims?"

"Not all men commit sexual harassment."

"What if the harassment claims made against a man are untrue?"

Yes, all these points have their own measure of validity. However, raising them in the midst of the conversation about widespread sexual harassment is emblematic of

IT IS AS REAL AS THE FACT THAT DESPITE RAPISTS BEING 94 PERCENT MALE, LESS THAN 7 PERCENT OF THEM ARE CONVICTED FOR THEIR CRIMES.

murderers treat the lives of their victims with.

Rape, as well as other forms of sexual harassment, is brought upon by the perpetrator's sense of entitlement over another person's body, their agency, their space, their life. Isn't it the same with murder? Don't thieves have the same sense of entitlement over another person's possessions? If the victims of all of these crimes are at the receiving end of their attackers' entitlement and inhumanity, why do we empathize with only some victims? Why do we discriminate against victims of sexual harassment on the basis of their supposed carelessness?

If we blame a rape victim for wearing a skirt, why don't we blame people who got beaten over the head for not having worn a helmet during the attack? The answer lies in the culture that surrounds sexual harassment. Yes, there is an elephant in the room: victims of sexual harassment are mostly female, and perpetrators are mostly male.

Rape culture, or the normalization of sexual violence, ties back to how differently our society treats men, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. It is an ugly truth that male privilege and partial-

ity towards white cisgender males is very much alive: it is as real as the pay gap and the higher employment and literacy rates of men. It is as real as the fact that despite rapists being 94 percent male, less than 7 percent of them are convicted for their crimes. If we are to address victim-blaming towards sexual harassment survivors, we have to acknowledge gender inequality.

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our bias towards men and the preservation of their dignity. In stubbornly stressing the "reality" of equal-opportunity harassment in defense of men, we are dismissive of an entire system that has made being a woman so dangerous and disadvantageous. It's just another method of turning a deaf ear towards women who declare victimhood.

When a victim comes forward with an accusation, do not let your predispositions cloud your judgment. Always listen. Opening up about being a victim of abuse is so difficult; it often becomes a new source of trauma. Such determination to power through more distress is likely rooted in truth.

The occurrence of sexual harassment does not depend on a woman's clothing, her looks, the expression of her sexuality, or where she walks at night. Sexual harassment happens because sexual harassers choose to harass. The decision to harass is likely helped by cultural conditions, but it is an active one. Therefore, it is nobody else's fault but the perpetrators'.

You don't blame that guy who got hit over the head for not wearing a helmet. Don't blame someone for having been raped. It's not rocket science. 🍌



WHY CHRISTMAS IS A BIG DEAL

BY ADE MAGNAYE



FEATURE

You know it's coming. The moment the calendar shifts to September, the mood changes. Decorations get broken out of storage. The streets are littered with parols. Mall music suddenly shifts into the holiday playlists. Green and red is the dominant color motif. And most importantly, Jose Mari Chan's classic song "Christmas in Our Hearts" is now piped into speakers everywhere.

Filipinos are really into Christmas. We love it so much, in fact, that we even try to stretch out the holidays as much as we could. The Philippines boasts the world's longest Christmas season, starting September and lasting all the way to the Feast of the Santo Niño on the third Sunday of January.

Our Christmas season covers Halloween, All Saints Day, and New Year's. And speaking from experience, all of these holidays are crammed together in a short period of time that they sometimes bleed together in one green and red blur that smells of quezo de bola and fruitcake.

But what is unique about the Filipino

We don't blame people who lose their self-control, though. How can anyone say no to ham, quezo de bola, and whatever your family considers a Christmas specialty? The holidays may be the only time of year when some people can have beef morcon or callos. And in the lead up to Noche Buena, we get to gorge on bibingka and puto bumbong, plus there's an overabundance of cookies, sweets, and other pastries in the form of gifts.

We – or our stomachs at least – are truly blessed this Christmas

ALL THE GIFTS AND PARTIES

Ah, Christmas parties. That huge, convoluted mess of social obligations that you have to navigate, where you have to politely decline the ones you don't feel like going to and send out some RSVPs in a vain effort to ensure you keep a semblance of having a social life with your peers.

You organize a night out with your friends, rent out a hotel room and pretend to be classy by bringing in wine and cheese,

ter you go to the nth sale in that mall just to look for that rare toy that your niece is looking for. And you might get broke afterwards. But it's all worth it. Imagine how happy kids are when they see that big pile of gifts by the tree and they open everything one by one.

I don't know about you, but that alone keeps me happy this Christmas.

LOOKING FOR A HAPPY HOLIDAY

We get it – the rest of the year has been difficult, with stress of all kinds multiplying over the previous months. We'd love to end the year with something wonderful. And it shows. According to a study done by the Social Weather Stations last year, Filipinos' expectations of a happy Christmas rose by over 10% in 2017.

Christmas is also viewed here unlike any other holiday – according to an interview done by Rappler with sociologists Dr Jayeel Cornelio and Dr Manuel Sapitula, Christmas is a festival, and by which elevates it from any other season.

SEEING COUSINS YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM IN YEARS, FINDING A SPARK OF RECONNECTION, WILL REMIND ANYONE OF HAPPIER TIMES.

Christmas experience that motivates us to celebrate it for four months? What motivates us to wake up at the break of dawn to trek to the nearest church for Simbang Gabi? Surely it can't be just the bibingka and puto bumbong. We won't tolerate the nearly endless loop of Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" if there wasn't something deeper than gifts, a couple of parties, and a few days off work.

ALL THAT FOOD

Easily one of the reasons why Christmas is a happy time is the food. Who can forget the wonderful food? Christmas is always a go-to excuse for abandoning the diets we (more or less) strictly follow the rest of the year. A Christmas spread that doesn't give a few additional pounds to anyone can be considered a failure.

when in reality you just want to get plastered with your high school barkada. Or you're the newest employee in your office and you get bullied – I mean volunteered – into joining the obligatory song and dance performance at your office Christmas party.

Speaking of office parties, how about that inescapable fact of life for any office-goer – the venerable Kris Kringle? You buy gifts to give to an anonymous benefactor, and you end up getting something you like in return, and you've built a rapport with that person in a short while.

However, gifts are an essential part of the holidays. We ensure that we get something for everyone, even if it means we get just a bunch of brownies to share with friends. Or you might splurge to buy something nice for your parents or pamangkin. It's tiring, and your feet might feel dead af-

ter. It also helps that Christmas is inherently a family occasion. Much like how Thanksgiving is the most important occasion for some American households because of family members going home, Christmas marks a time when family members overseas go home, sons & daughters go home for that all-important Noche Buena. Empty nests get filled, and the family is complete, even for just a few days. Seeing cousins you haven't heard from in years, finding a spark of reconnection, will remind anyone of happier times.

So, why are Filipinos big on Christmas? It's hard to pin down, really. It's a big mass of factors that, when combined, leads us to extend Christmas as much as we can. We've put our own stamp on the season and turned this holiday into our own.

Now it's time to play that Jose Mari Chan song yet again.



RAW DATA

CHRISTMAS BY THE NUMBERS

Christmas time in the country not only bring us gifts and merrymaking, it also comes with a series of interesting facts and figures.

As a festive people, Filipinos love to celebrate, and what better way to illustrate this fact than by having the longest Christmas season in the world, starting from September until the first weeks of January, which lasts around 4 ½ months.



4 ½ MONTHS
longest christmas season

Many Filipinos are devout Catholics and adhere to tradition. A series of masses called Simbang Gabi is celebrated prior to Christmas Day on the 25th. Held in all catholic parishes from December 16 until the 24th, Simbang Gabi lasts for a total of 9 days.



9 DAYS
simbang gabi

Christmas is also considered the biggest holiday in the country, with Christians making up around 90% of the population.



90%
christian population

Whenever people see boys and girls selling lanterns on the street, they remember not only the child in manger as he sleeps, but also the holiday aesthetic that must be upheld in every household. The Philippine parol, which represents the North Star during the Nativity and was based on the Mexican piñata, can be found in many Pinoy homes. The largest ones can reach up to 40 feet in breadth, many of which are on display during the Grand Lantern Festival in Pampanga.

40 FEET
lantern size



While the Noche Buena and Media Noche take center stage during the holiday season, there are 5 feasts that are celebrated throughout the country. Joining the aforementioned Noche Buena and Media Noche are the Feast of the Black Nazarene, Feast of the Santo Niño, and the Feast of the Three Kings.



5 FEASTS
holiday season feasts

Not everyone elects to spend Christmas Day at home, which is a surprise considering how tightly knit the families are in the country. 49% of Filipinos aged 15 and up spend Christmas out of town while 40.7% spend New Year outside the metro.



15+
49%
christmas out of town



15+
40.7%
new year outside of metro



SHE SHOTS

If you're looking for a fresh perspective on the Second Amendment, consider heading to the green wilds of Vermont— and the growing network of women-run gun clubs

BY **JULIA COOKE** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **REBECCA SMEYNE**





Five years ago, Ellen Jareckie found a dying raccoon in the back of her garage. He lay on her dog's bed, and he was enormous. The game warden wouldn't be able to make it to the house for a day or two.

The inability to ease an animal's suffering was unusual for Jareckie, who had a state wildlife rehabilitation permit and who'd nursed pigeons, mice and once a great blue heron back to health. She couldn't bring herself to smack the raccoon over the head with a two-by-four. She also couldn't touch him for fear of rabies. Maybe her brother had a point, she thought: "Get a gun," he'd long suggested. Jareckie, a self-employed painter who lives in the rambling arcadia of Vermont, initially had no interest. But she often encountered sick and dying animals that needed to be safely euthanized. She bought a handgun and a fireproof safe, and she signed up for a basic pistol course.

Three years after she'd come upon the raccoon, she met Marsha Thompson. They'd both gotten involved with the local branch of the National Rifle Association's Women on Target training program. Women who'd taken the course began to volunteer to train others, and in 2016 Thompson took the reins of the Vermont division. Her course became the first of its kind nationwide: firearms training exclusively for women, taught exclusively by women.

Women are the fastest-growing demographic inside the NRA. Both inside the organization and around it, training courses, blogs, podcasts and product ranges are aimed at women, featuring taglines such as "Where the Feminine and Firearms Meet" and "Where Style and Self-Reliance Coexist."

"A lot of women haven't found a safe space—safe being a strange word to use—where they can learn to shoot and not deal with men's egos," Thompson, a 39-year Army veteran, told me when I called to ask her for some shooting instruction. I'd visited a backyard range once before and enjoyed it; this time, I wanted to learn what the experience would be like with no men involved. I also wanted to understand what Thompson and Jareckie and their team had activated up in Vermont—and how the conversation around guns might differ among their cohort.

In the post-Parkland debate over gun legislation, women's voices have grown louder across the political spectrum. Picture mothers lobbying for the freedom to send their kids to school with neither fear nor bullet-proof backpacks while speakers at the Conservative Political Action Conference call gun rights a feminist issue and NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch tells a CNN town hall that packing a gun keeps a woman safe from rape. In Vermont, the stakes were suddenly high: As the state moved toward passing a raft of gun laws in April, hundreds of protestors lined up at the state capitol days before their passage to collect 1,200 30-round mag-



Ellen Jareckie and Marsha Thompson.

azines for AR-15 and M4 weapons, donated in protest by a firearms accessory manufacturer.

...

The April morning I drive to Marsha Thompson's farm is a stark Vermont idiosyncrasy. A light whisking of snow, a scrim of ice at the river's edge, morning sun bright and warm by eight a.m. but the air still well below freezing. Thompson lives on 43 acres with an impressive array of animals: horses and chickens, a Rottweiler named Zelda and a bulldog named Winston.

When Thompson joined the Army in 1973, the women wore skirts and weren't permitted to shoot guns. Over the course of her career, she became an instructor, earned a science degree, entered the reserve and worked for the state as a land surveyor. By the time she'd retired from both Army

and state jobs 39 years later, Thompson had spent a decade as the only female marksmanship instructor in Vermont.

After retirement, she started to go to the firing range with the Burlington Rifle & Pistol Club "for the camaraderie and the fun and all that kind of stuff," she tells me as we sit in the living room of her 200-year-old farmhouse. Pastoral murals on the walls, painted by her partner, pull the countryside indoors.

At the range, teaching civilians was both natural and unanticipated as she practiced for competitive matches. "I had women coming up to me because I seemed to know what I was doing, I guess, and asking where they could get training," she says. "They didn't want to get training from the men, particularly." Men got competitive. Men—the fear of assault or an aggressive ex—were the reason many women wanted to learn to shoot in the first place. That Thompson is calm and matter-of-fact, with a face that appears impassive even when it cracks into a smile and then just as quickly out of it, probably helped.

In a yellow field behind her house she sets out three guns: a Ruger compact .22, a .38 revolver and a .45. She explains how the size and shape of each firearm will feel different in my hand before setting it in my palm and tells me how each will feel to shoot: heavier and lighter, more and less kick. Load a magazine like so. Never, ever point a gun at a human I'm not prepared to shoot. Push with my right hand and pull with my left. Thumb down, hips squared,

shoulders relaxed. After squeezing through the five shots in the magazine and emptying the chamber, slide a bright yellow piece of plastic through the chamber and barrel.

We don't speak much as we shoot. I like the quiet between blasts, the technical challenge, the way it makes me conscious of my muscles, my breathing and my surroundings. I miss the target on four of my five first shots, but by the end of our session, Thompson's easy interjections help me invert the ratio.

"Most girls are good at shooting," she says as we walk back from the target on our last round. "They have more attention to detail; there's less ego. They're always thinking about what's going on around them."

Attendees at Thompson's courses have ranged in age from 12 to 82. They've been motivated by wildlife rescue, safety con-



cerns, curiosity and the desire to learn more about a specific kind of firearm. Some have said their husbands wanted them to learn to handle a gun; others have told Thompson that their husbands thought they were out shopping. Only about a quarter have wound up buying a gun. Fine by her—Thompson is about knowledge, not purchasing power. Though she remains a staunch NRA supporter, she rankled at some of the organization's tactics when she worked with the Women on Target program. How they were “always pushing product” and online courses versus hands-on practice guided by knowledgeable instructors. The NRA didn't like small clinics, which Thompson didn't understand; the association didn't approve of the army pants she wore either.

Last year, Thompson and Jareckie and a

high gun ownership statistics do not correlate directly with national voting trends. Independent senator Bernie Sanders, reelected with more than 70 percent of the vote in 2012, got flack during the 2016 presidential primary from Hillary Clinton about his relatively pro-gun platform. Conservative commentators have called the state “safe, happy and armed to the teeth.” Which isn't entirely true, especially for women—Vermont also has startlingly high statistics for domestic violence. More than 60 percent of violent crime in the state takes place in the home.

Among the one in five American females who own guns, self-protection is the most commonly cited reason for keeping firearms. But whether owning a gun makes a person any safer is a matter of debate. According to the National Institutes of Health, armed in-

circles, though I'd read her lucid writing on guns in the literary review *Tin House*. But she often finds her perspective absent from the national dialogue: Weise is female and small, and she has one leg made of flesh and one prosthetic. Disabled people in the U.S. are three times more likely than the general population to be victims of violent crime.

She purchased a gun six years ago at the age of 30. She's usually the only woman at her local South Carolina range, logging her practice hours. “I've never had to use my firearm,” she tells me, “but then I wonder about the question, because it almost feels like I use it every single day of my life by default of it being in my house, loaded, no safety, ready to go.”

Feeling safe can shape how a woman understands the world and her place in it: Jar-

“MOST GIRLS ARE GOOD AT SHOOTING. THEY'RE ALWAYS



number of the other women involved in the Vermont Women on Target clinics split from the NRA to found the nonprofit Vermont Women's Shooting Association. Thompson asked local fish and game clubs if they'd serve as hosts, and they eagerly agreed. Thompson built benches and target frames, Jareckie designed a logo, and they started advertising. Over the summer, 27 women attended eight beginner and intermediate clinics. Thompson's goal was education, but she wouldn't complain if she could get a few more women to be competitors.

Bureaucracy appropriate to a national organization seemed at odds with Vermont, a state whose culture defies easy stereotyping. Vermont is rural and among the least populous in the nation. It's the only state where

individuals are 4.5 times more likely to be shot in an assault than those not in possession of a gun. Statistics may not bear out the assertion that a gun makes the human who holds or owns it safer from crime, but for the women with whom I spoke—all of whom have gone through extensive firearm training, practice target shooting regularly and said they wouldn't have bought a gun if they weren't deeply confident in their ability to use it safely and effectively—a firearm certainly makes them *feel* safer.

“There was a 180 in my emotional landscape when it came to ‘Oh my gosh, I'm in my house and I have nothing but a flashlight to protect me’ versus ‘I'm in my house with a loaded gun,’” says poet and professor Jillian Weise. She tends not to talk about guns in her

eckie and the wildlife she loves; Thompson and her competence in a male field; Weise and how the world perceives her vulnerability. Most of these women are aware that feeling safe is not the same as *being* safe. But for now, I hear beneath their words, it's what they've got.

...

The air has warmed to a balmy 40 degrees two days later, on April 11, the day Governor Phil Scott signs Vermont's new gun laws. Scott has arranged for a public signing on the Montpelier capitol steps. The move feels like a benediction granted to his most vocal critics and supporters, or at least those who have the luxury of showing up at two p.m. on a Wednesday.

The day after the Parkland shooting, Gov-



ernor Scott, a Republican, pledged not to change the state's lack of restrictions on firearms. But then police picked up a Vermont 18-year-old whose journal laid out plans for a school shooting in tiny Fair Haven. He'd bought a shotgun and four boxes of ammunition. "I will gear up and let loose my anger and hatred. It'll be fantastic," he'd written.

"Everything should be on the table at this point," Scott said shortly after. Within two months, three new gun-control bills were drawn up and approved. They allow police to remove guns from people considered a risk and those with domestic-assault citations, ban bump stocks and high-capacity handgun magazines, raise the legal purchasing age to 21 and require universal background checks.

Party lines did not hold as state legislators voted on the bills. Some lawmakers took is-

orange pops against the gray of stone and sky. non law-abiding citizens do not follow the gun laws, reads one sign. my rights don't end where your feelings and misconceptions begin! reads another. Underneath, in small letters, MVGA (Make Vermont Great Again). To these citizens, Scott is, in their words, a traitor, a liar, a pansy. Many wear stickers that read, DON'T NEW YORK MY VERMONT GUN RIGHTS.

Few women have come to protest the bills. I speak with a voluble, warm, middle-aged woman named Lorraine who tells me she thinks armed guards will do more than legal restrictions to dispel school shooters. As we speak, her husband pushes between us. "If you're talking to her, you're talking to me too," he says. She shoots him a look and keeps talking.

"Yes, with a gun," he says. "Because a recent CDC study has shown that guns are the best way to defend yourself, that you have the least likely risk of getting injured yourself in your own self-defense. You can look that up."

The study in question is called "Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence." Released in 2013, it's actually about the lack of reliable research on the risks and rewards of gun ownership. Depending on where you look, the study points out, estimates of defensive firearm use range from 108,000 to 3 million instances each year. "The lack of comprehensive data sets and...the fact that the data lead to contradictory conclusions call into question the reliability and validity of gun-violence data," write the authors.

In the absence of reliable statistics, it be-

THINKING ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND THEM."



sue with the difficulty of enforcing the high-capacity magazine ban, which places restrictions on magazines sold or possessed in the state after October 1, 2018. Others had problems with the age limit; in a state with steep income inequality, some families teach their tweens to hunt to help put food on the table. "It drove the leadership crazy," Representative Susan Buckholz had told me earlier. Now, in Montpelier, we walk together toward the gold-domed capitol and the signing.

A few hundred Vermonters have amassed on either side of the capitol steps, with journalists scurrying between camps of protestors and supporters of the new legislation. thank you, gov. scott, declares a sign on one side. THIS IS WHAT A HERO LOOKS LIKE.

On the other side of the steps, hunters'

A woman named Elizabeth tells me she's been the victim of domestic abuse. After she'd disentangled herself from the abusive ex, she bought a gun. She supports the ban on bump stocks but not the age restrictions. Nearby, a handsome 40-ish man named Eli says he's at the capitol for a variety of reasons. "I believe that self-defense is a basic human right. Also I have a daughter who's almost seven and I'm very, very concerned about the direction that these things are going," he says. "When she gets older and she's out on her own, especially when she's very young, just starting out, she may not be able to afford the best housing or things like that. I want to make sure that she's still able to protect herself."

"With a gun?" I ask.

gins to seem like feelings are what men are talking about too.

...

To discuss guns with responsible, thoughtful people who own them is to invite flamboyant suggestions and sensitive observations. In the course of reporting this story, I've heard a male gun owner propose that all fellow owners should be legally liable for whatever their firearm does. I've heard a female gun owner suggest that men have proven themselves unworthy of the technology, so only women should be able to own guns, which should be issued—along with a year's worth of training and a driver's license—upon a young woman's 16th birthday. I've heard an avid hunter, the father of a toddler who will grow into a gun-proficient



Preceding pages and above: Scenes from the 2018 Vermont State Rifle & Pistol Association's outdoor spring tournament in Jericho. Both Jareckie and Thompson competed.

woman, refer to his ambivalence toward the “ersatz masculinity” of gun aficionados of both genders.

Although Representative Buckholz and her husband own guns, they didn’t store them at home when her now-grown son lived with them. These days, Buckholz has been logging hours at the range; at the age of 61, she has a stalker. She tells me she isn’t sure what she’ll do if he shows up on her front step. Feeling safe not only means different things to different people but can shift with changing circumstances.

As my interviews wrap up, a number of women point out to me that they identify as political independents. “I’m not a Trump supporter,” one says. “I tend to vote down the middle,” Jareckie tells me. In this they are indicative of a national trend, especially where gun laws are concerned. In a 2017 Pew Research Center study, six in 10 Republican and Republican-leaning female gun owners reported favoring a ban on assault-style weapons and creating a federal government database to track gun sales, as compared with about a third of their male counterparts. Nearly 90 percent of the same group of women favored barring gun purchases by the mentally ill and people on no-fly lists, as well as background checks for private sales.

Over and over, in every interview with a female gun owner, legislator or activist, a single word comes up: fear. The right to live unafraid; the fear of losing rights. Male fear, female fear; true fear, manipulated fear; fear of the hypothetical and the tangible.

“We’re scared shitless in this country right now. I can’t remember a time that I’ve ever felt everything to be so destabilized,” says Buckholz. “We’re allowed to be afraid as women. Encouraged, supported in it. But if you are a white male, you’re not supposed to be afraid. You’re supposed to be in charge. And you’re terrified.”

Given room to breathe, fear can flourish into dialogue, another state legislator points

out to me. “Women come to this conversation having lived our lives physically, literally vulnerable, and knowing that that is a normal state of being,” Sarah Copeland-Hanzas tells me as we sit inside Vermont’s capitol building. “So we’re willing to have conversations—how do you balance someone’s need to protect themselves with society’s need to defend against the errant or the crazy or the temporarily insane?”

And fear plus a firearm equals scenarios that can and do go tragically wrong based on an unpredictable matrix of reality, anxiety and bias. That same April week in Michigan, a white homeowner shot at a 14-year-old black boy who’d knocked on his door to ask directions to the high school after he’d missed his bus. Black Americans are the victims of more than half of all gun-related homicides, though they constitute only 14 percent of the national population.

...

A few days after our first shooting lesson, I meet Thompson and Jareckie for target practice with the Burlington Rifle & Pistol Club at the National Guard’s Camp Ethan Allen Training Site. As we set up, my target flanked by theirs, discussion whirls around us about Vermont’s new gun rules and regulations. I overhear one man telling a trio that the 17 state senators who voted “against your Second Amendment rights” were transplants from out of state. “Flatlanders,” they’re called here.

We begin to shoot. At first, the sensations—the unfamiliar rat-a-tat of many bullets in tandem, the sudden scent of gunpowder—unmoor me. I am no longer one person on a bucolic backyard range. When I set my gun down, I forget to thread the empty-chamber indicator through the gun. Jareckie reaches silently into my range of vision and does it for me. “Remember to push and pull,” Thompson says coolly. Before long, I am immersed in the challenge, silent and focused. Having fun.

“You think you’d ever want to carry?” one of the men nearby asks me at the end of the

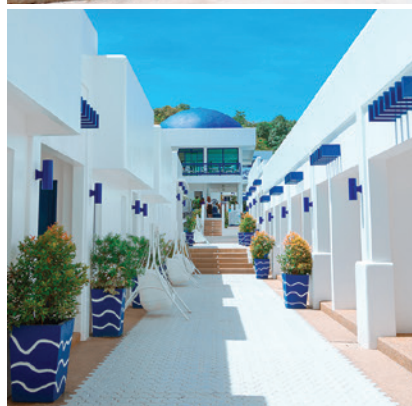
session. “I very much doubt it,” I say. “I’ll give you three months before you change your mind,” he says with a chuckle.

This is the fundamental difference, I suddenly understand, between shooting guns with men, or white men, at least, and women. Women have skin in the game—our vulnerable bodies—and yet few gendered expectations around our expertise with or enthusiasm for the technology in our hands. The result is a conversation that can center, at its best, on technologies and their capabilities, actions and their consequences. A group of Americans, as Copeland-Hanzas implied, uniquely qualified to lead the way on an issue riddled with fear and misinformation.

An examination later that day of the biographies and voting records of Vermont state senators revealed no correlation between state of birth and yea or nay votes on the new gun laws. Still, even on the left, some were wary of a triumphal tone about the gun laws’ passage. “Everyone’s feeling like we’ve done something great here,” Buckholz, a Democrat, had told me before warning that some related challenges—Vermont’s mental health facilities, the socioeconomic and cultural polarities of a proudly rural state—had gone exactly nowhere.

Her caution was appropriate. Before the end of April, gun-rights groups had filed a constitutional challenge to the magazine ban. Thompson, meanwhile, was busy firming up her summer plans. She hoped to add a defensive clinic to the lineup, since so many women last year had requested one. The year’s first beginner clinic, in May, had attracted 17 sign-ups in three days. The event represented a step up: bigger numbers, sponsored by the Vermont State Rifle & Pistol Association, at the National Guard range. She’d opened the attendance to both genders—three men and three boys had signed up—and enlisted a few guys from the pistol club to help oversee the large group.

But the women were in charge. **N**



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PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR

AND THEN THERE WAS ONE. **PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR 2018 MAINE EUGENIO**
HAS WORN MANY HATS AS A MODEL, DANCER, SINGER, AND PLAYMATE. TURNS OUT,
A TIARA IS THE MOST FITTING HEADGEAR FOR THIS QUEEN.

HER

N A M E I S

Maine

WORDS BY **PAUL WENCESLAO**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **OWEN REYES**

CREATIVE DIRECTION BY **ADAM PENN**

MAKE UP BY

MAY ALMAZAN

AND

LINKEE COUSNARD

STYLING BY

OLIE PABUSTAN

SHOT ON LOCATION AT

CORON, PALAWAN





“I took everything that I had to go through as a challenge; the doubters, the bashers, and those who never believed in me. I made them part of my inspiration to succeed.”

In the past couple of months, we saw three beauties stand out from the pack, each of whom making a strong case to win the grand prize. With the tension palpable at every juncture, the lovely combatants gutted it out to turn friends into supporters, strangers into doting followers, and everybody who is anybody into voters. The dust has settled. The smoke has cleared. And in the end, only one can grace the main stage – Maine’s stage.

2018 Playmate of the Year Maine Eugenio, days prior to winning the title, still couldn’t fathom the thought of being one of the selected few to qualify for the prize, much less reaching the pinnacle of being one of Playboy Philippines’ quintessential beauty icons. For the former TV dancer, becoming a Playmate was already a dream and wearing the Playmate of the Year crown is the realm of fairy tale books bleeding into reality, with Maine cast as queen among her peers.

“All three of us deserve to win,” she shares in Filipino. “I never really assumed that I would win. If anything is meant to happen, it will happen, and nobody can take that away from you. For me, it’s all about manifesting my own lane. It’s all about acting like the Playmate of the Year regardless if I win or not.”

The road to becoming a Playmate was no walk in the park for the headstrong 28-year-old, who had to face her share of rejections from previous employers. As a youngster who wanted to dance with her idols on TV, she got caught passing herself off as an adult, which speaks volumes of her drive when she wants something badly. There was also the time when she got pregnant and was made to choose between keeping her job as a TV dancer and keeping her kid. She opted to become a mom, then vowed to do everything in her power to give her child a good life.

Down on her luck and thinking about the welfare of her kid, Maine did what she had always wanted to do. She danced – even when there were very few people in attendance at the small club and conventions she was working for. She danced – even when recalling her frustrations and fighting tears due to previously dashed dreams as well as the pressure of being a single parent. She never stopped dancing. And that would lead her to being discovered and becoming the vocalist of her own girl group in RockChx, whom she continues to perform with to this day.

“I took everything that I had to go through as a challenge; the doubters, the bashers, and those who never believed in me. I made them part of my inspiration to

succeed. On the day that I reach my goals, I don’t need them to take back what they said or apologize. Only two words from them matter to me, and those are ‘Congratulations, Maine.’”

Maine did reach one of her goals when an agent brought to her attention that Playboy was looking for Playmates. Doubting that she had what it takes to become a model, much less for a renowned outfit like Playboy, she ignored it at first until curiosity began to drown out her inhibitions.

“I was so afraid of being rejected,” she admits. “And then I thought, if being a Playmate is for me, then so be it. What have I got to lose anyway? And so I went to the auditions, got selected, and learned about modeling from all the people around me. I felt the genuine trust and support that they gave me. So at that point, why wouldn’t I give it my best shot?”

For the average person, giving it their all means going a shade beyond their perceived limits, but Maine is anything but average; she does not abide by standard mortal rules. She was admittedly jittery at first, but when it was time to face the camera, we saw a completely different persona – it was the dancer, the radiant being who treats every expanse as a stage, and every chance to communicate a performance. We were mesmerized.

And we got to see more of that persona during the Playmate of the Year competition. For someone who barely had any experience in modeling prior to joining Playboy, she was constantly outshining her more experienced peers with relative ease. It’s no surprise that the slender siren unknowingly drew the attention of a foreign iteration of Playboy.

“At first, I thought it wasn’t real until the people in the office confirmed to me that Playboy Mexico was interested. They said that they’re willing to shoulder everything just so I could appear in their pages. Of course, I couldn’t believe it. I am overjoyed. Never in my life did I imagine posing for a magazine, yet here I am.”

It wasn’t only the attention of foreign outfits that Maine managed to draw. Regularly, followers profess their love for the feisty bombshell on social media, which leads us to the question, who exactly is the lucky guy who can take her heart for safekeeping?

“I don’t normally go for looks nowadays. I used to when I was younger, but I’m done with that. Right now, what matters to me is if he knows how to respect a woman. One way to know that is by seeing how he treats his mom. If he is respectful of his mom, then he would know how to respect women and treat them properly.”

“I’m thankful for everything that has happened.”

Maine does not believe in courtship nor does she demand from her guy lavish dinners and extravagant gifts. Learning from experience, she now places a high regard for natural chemistry, beyond the allure of objects that carry price tags and the willing captivity to romantic fantasies. As a gorgeous single woman, she is biding her time in finding the right partner.

“I don’t mind where he takes me when we go for a date. We could be eating fish balls or drinking Red Horse at a 7-Eleven and it wouldn’t matter. What I truly cherish is our connection and his presence if I’m really into him,” she explains.

And this mature take on relationships extends to her view on intimate moments.

“You don’t plan these things. Sex happens eventually, and the most enjoyable sex happens when I have a genuine connection with my partner,” she adds.

Winning Playmate of the Year definitely pushes Maine’s career into a higher trajectory, but she remains grounded. She sees the title as an avenue for her to empower other women, including other models, intending lift the nude modeling industry beyond the obtuse notion that those who take their clothes off for art and glamor are automatically sex workers or porn stars.

“I want those who see my photos to appreciate not just my body, but also the story behind them. In an ideal world, I would not need a caption for viewers to see the tale behind an image or see my story as a person in it,” she opines.

This early, we already know that Maine Eugenio’s reign as Playmate of the Year would be one for the ages. Her captivating personality endears her to all while her unyielding determination to succeed makes her both an aspiration and inspiration to others. That said, our queen is gracious enough to leave us a parting shot.

“I’m thankful for everything that has happened. As a Playmate, not only did I get to refine my personality, I also learned to give importance on what it truly means to be a woman.” 🙌





*"I want those who see my photos
to appreciate not just my body, but
also the story behind them."*











FEATURE

SHE NEVER STOPPED FIGHTING

With justice as her driving force, Kumander Liway took the fight to a government regime, then after surviving the ordeal, brought the fight to slavery and human trafficking.

BY **Marco Sumayao**

Her fingernails were caked with dirt. With the enemy drawing close, she set her rifle aside and began frantically digging a foxhole. Her comrade, Berto, was on lookout. They kept low to the ground, knowing that at any moment, the government's soldiers would not hesitate to shoot at the slightest glimpse of their company.

Her lover was elsewhere in the jungle, fighting for his life. It had been a couple of years since they'd met, both leaders of rebel factions hoping to put an end to the Marcos regime. They'd spent quiet moments together in the deeply forested regions of Negros, finding time to let their desires express themselves amidst all the running, hiding, and fighting.

On this day, however, with the army being tipped off on the whereabouts of the famous Kumander Liway and Kumander Toto, there could be no quiet.

Liway looked at the foxhole she was digging. It was small—it wasn't even big enough for a child—but it was all she needed. Berto dropped to the ground. She followed suit, albeit gently, taking great care not to hurt the child growing in her womb. She cradled her belly and laid it into the foxhole. She would survive, and somewhere out there, so would Toto; and their son, resting now in the cold soil, would live to tell their story.

Years before she was Kumander Liway, Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda was a child selling dried fish in Bacolod City to help her parents make ends meet. On days not burdened with sales and school, she'd salvage recyclables from dumpsters. Every day was a struggle to lift herself and her family out of poverty.

As she grew older, she grew more and more aware of the oppressive divide between the haves and have-nots in the Philippines; the impoverished were considered as lesser caste, and therefore undeserving of certain human rights. When she entered college, she gained an interest in Liberation Theology, then a radical Christian philosophy centered on the fight against poverty and social injustice. Cecilia became a well-known catechist in her neighborhood, teaching people the value of their rights, and spurring them to fight back when those rights are endangered.

Liberation Theology was also considered a dangerous subversive ideology at the time, as the Philippines was under Martial Law. Any idea or form of mass media that was deemed to speak critically of, or even simply dissent with the Marcos regime—even tangentially, in the case of the Japanese cartoon Voltes V—was met with censorship, intimidation, or both. Cecilia had already been warned by concerned friends and family to discontinue her catechism, but it was too late; she had already begun associating with rebels and communist sympathizers.

Then, one evening, she found the headquarters of her catechist group, a small hut near the grassy fields of Negros, ransacked by the military. It was then that she knew she had no recourse but to join the resistance hiding in the mountains, and the legend of Kumander Liway, the fierce female freedom fighter, was born.

As sunset approached, Berto knew it was time for him and Liway to find a new place to hide. He told Liway to get up, run, and protect the baby; he would provide cover fire while they made their escape. Berto barely got two shots out before the military fired back with a rain of bullets, killing him on the spot. Liway crawled over to the corpse of her trusted friend, her comrade-in-arms, and cried surrender.

Before her captors led her down the mountain, where the other prisoners were being held, a handful of them brought their knives out and cut lockets of her hair. It was a souvenir, they said, of the time they caught a celebrity criminal.

Liway was led to the other captives, among whom, to her relief, was

Toto. She was to be taken to Camp Delgado along with him, as a "mercy" for the expecting parents. The rest of their comrades were killed on the spot, after their surrender. At a press conference following their arrest, it was said that they were killed in a skirmish, and that Liway and Toto were the only ones to survive the encounter.

That was in 1982. Over the next four years, Cecilia would give birth in prison and raise her son at the camp. The boy, named Dakip ("capture"), would spend the first years of his life behind the walls and barbed wire fences of Camp Delgado, never knowing what the ocean looked like, and able to sleep only after an authority declared "Lights off." To maintain a sense of innocence in his childhood, Cecilia would tell him stories of the Philippines' enchanted creatures, filling his head with magic and hope in a time of darkness.

Life in Camp Delgado was constantly on edge. The only way they'd know if their fellow rebels were still alive would be through letters mailed back and forth between prison camps; if someone failed to write back, the likelihood was that they were summarily executed, their murders never appearing on any official record. Officers would call prisoners in for interviews, and some would never return. One by one, the administration's opponents were being culled like livestock. Cecilia was never entirely sure she'd live to see the outside world, her beloved hometown and its place by the sea, ever again.

Then, miraculously, the 1986 EDSA Revolution happened. Political prisoners and former insurgents were granted amnesty by the new administration. Cecilia and her family—including Dakip—were free to go. While most of those freed from the prison camps were content to live quiet private lives moving forward, Cecilia never moved on from her desire to fight for human rights.

In 1991, she co-founded the Visayan Forum Foundation International (VFFI), an organization that would grow to be the largest Philippine NGO combating slavery and human trafficking. Through VFFI, Cecilia assists in the rescue, shelter, rehabilitation, and education of children and women

sold to slavery, either as illegal domestic workers, sex workers, or worse. As president of VFFI, she's received numerous awards for her organization's work, including the 2005 Anti-Slavery Award from the world's oldest human rights organization, Anti-Slavery International; and the 2011 World's Children's Prize for their achievements in fighting child labor and trafficking.

She then faced a different battle on the legal front in 2012, when VFFI was accused of falsifying documents to mask a misuse of funds from USAID. It took a gruelling four years of court proceedings to clear VFFI of all charges on the basis of a lack of evidence, and Cecilia was since been able to continue her decades-long fight for human rights.

In 2017, filmmaker Kip Oebanda—the very same Dakip born in Camp Delgado—began working on a project that would share his mother's story with the world. The film, *Liway*, was partially funded by the reparations paid to the Oebanda family for the abuses they suffered under the Marcos regime. It became the Cinemalaya film festival's highest-ever grossing film to date, with audiences chanting the very same protests that Cecilia herself did nearly 40 years ago, after the credits rolled.

The movie has drawn public interest in Cecilia, the real-life Liway, and her humanitarian work. In her, people see a person whose resolve to fight for human rights has never wavered. In her, they see a mother who never stopped fighting to make sure that children never grew up captives of poverty, slavery, or oppressive systems.

In Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, we see a strong woman who was never afraid to get her hands dirty in the struggle for justice, and she will never stop fighting. **Y**

In Ma. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, we see a strong woman who was never afraid to get her hands dirty in the struggle for justice, and she will never stop fighting.



"Thanks, Siri, but please limit your directions to my driving."



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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a bright blue one-piece bikini, is sitting on the hood of a white classic car. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The car's hood and front grille are visible, featuring a silver Mustang logo. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

AN INTIMATE

AFFAIR

WORDS BY **BRENDA DEPASUPIL**

NOVEMBER IS THE THANKSGIVING MONTH. AS SUCH, WE GIVE THANKS
FOR FEISTY BEAUTY KATE GONZALES, OUR MISS NOVEMBER,
AND HER PENCHANT FOR KINK.



PLAYMATE



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **OWEN REYES**

MAKEUP BY MAY ALMAZAN
STYLING BY OLIE PABUSTAN





Typically, the weather starts to cool down by November as we feel the initial chill of the holiday season. Winter, however, is not coming this year with the appearance of sultry Miss November Kate Gonzales on this issue as she turns the area in front of the camera into a firestorm by baring her every physical asset on camera. Trust us, she is even sexier than what her tantalizing curves suggest.

Playmate Kate has the face of an angel and flawless milky skin, but don't let her innocent smile fool you. She has an inner kink that would excite those who are adventurous in bedroom activities and may intimidate those who aren't prepared to shift their sex lives to a higher gear. The daring 25-year-old is an angel in the streets and a devil in the sheets.

"The wildest thing that I've tried is having myself tied up in the bedroom while my partner does all sorts of stuff. It's crazy," she admits, alluding to her willingness to experiment as regards to her intimate activities.

Kate's knack for adventure carries over to her photo-shoot with us. As a professional model, she has an especially carefree and daring attitude when it comes to her shoots, which is why she did not have any qualms baring it all in front of the camera. As long as a shoot's theme is done in good taste, she considers her alluring figure as a canvas for art and glamour. She also has a warm and welcoming personality that drives away any semblance of awkwardness to a scenario that might make less-experienced models squeamish.

"It doesn't matter that you look pretty and have a great body. It's your confidence that will give you good photos," she says.

Aside from having a carefree demeanor, another major contributor to Kate's admirable level of confidence is her dedication to stay in shape and maintain a healthy lifestyle. She does bodybuilding on top of regular exercise and having a proper diet. As it turns out, the gorgeous siren did not always have the nicely-toned torso that has made her a favorite among photographers in the metro.





**"IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT
YOU LOOK PRETTY AND HAVE
A GREAT BODY – IT'S YOUR
CONFIDENCE THAT WILL GIVE
YOU GOOD PHOTOS."**



"A few years back, I was chubby. You won't recognize me in my photos. I lost ten kilos with a calorie restriction diet, cardio, and weights. I am now looking to transitioning to vegetarianism, both for health and ethical reasons," says our November Playmate.

If you follow Kate on social media, you would notice that only does she post images and videos that pack a lot of heat, she also endorses a good amount of products from various brands. When we pried about this fact, we learned that the sultry bombshell studied marketing and is, in fact, an entrepreneur outside of the spotlight. More than just a pretty face, she knows how to monetize her assets and is willing to grab any viable opportunity to earn that comes along her way.

That said, Playmate Kate is the very embodiment of sensory pleasure. She has the brains to engage in captivating conversations, a body to marvel at, and the scent of an ornate bouquet. Her sensual touch on things make for a burst of satisfying feelings. Like tiny explosives. 📸









PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: MICHAEL SHANNON

A candid conversation with the star of screen and stage whose bone-deep empathy leads to indelible, Oscar-worthy performances but stops at the gates of the White House

You're not likely to find a better example of the real Michael Shannon than the story of how he spent this year's Academy Awards night. Although he wasn't nominated, *The Shape of Water*—the interspecies romance in which he co-stars as a sadistic government agent—was up for several categories, including best picture. When it took the top prize, Shannon didn't join his director and castmates onstage; instead, he watched it all from the Old Town Ale House, a Chicago fixture where the jukebox never gets turned off and a painting of a naked Sarah Palin with a machine gun hangs on a wall. Shannon was sitting alone at the bar in a puffy jacket, nursing a beer beneath the tiny TV. If any other A-list actor had done this, it would have felt like a bad PR stunt. But when Shannon skips the red carpet to slum it at a dive bar, it feels exactly right—the perfect expression of his mercurial spirit.

If Shannon has a master plan for his career, it's difficult to pinpoint; then again, the

same could be said of his entire life. From an early age, he was a natural vagabond: Born in Lexington, Kentucky, he bounced between living with his mother, a social worker in Lexington, and his father, an accounting professor in Chicago. After dropping out of high school, he co-founded A Red Orchid Theatre in Chicago, then broke into movies, first as a bit player in *Groundhog Day*, before deciding he wanted to do theater instead. He fled back to Chicago to do plays including Tracy Letts's *Bug* and *Killer Joe*, both of which went on to critical acclaim in New York and London, which led to bigger roles in such blockbusters as *Pearl Harbor* and *Bad Boys II*, which led to filmmaker Werner Herzog, who has cast Shannon three times to date, calling him “arguably the most important [actor] of his generation.”

Shannon manages to appear in at least one prestigious art-house movie every year, two of which—*Nocturnal Animals* and *Revolutionary Road*—have earned him Oscar

nominations. But beyond that, his choices are all over the map. He has played a lot of bad guys, from an abusive boyfriend in *8 Mile* to a contract killer in *The Iceman* to a corrupt Prohibition agent in the HBO series *Boardwalk Empire*, but he bristles at any suggestion of typecasting. Whether it's a book-burning zealot in *Fahrenheit 451* or a pissed-off sorority girl in a *Funny or Die* video, he can be simultaneously ferocious and achingly vulnerable.

In his new movie, *What They Had*, about a woman with Alzheimer's and the family struggling to protect her, Shannon ventures into new territory as the funniest character in an otherwise heart-wrenching drama. When he tells his sister, played by Hilary Swank, how their confused mother tried to seduce him, it's a welcome moment of comedic relief. “I just kept calling her Mom,” he explains. “Thanks, Mom. It's nice to see you too, Mom. I'm really glad you birthed me, Mom.” His character calls his sister



“The people I play—whatever reductive term you want to use, villains or whatever—they're all in their own private shit box. They're all suffering as much as any other human being on earth.”



“Harvey Weinstein grabbed my arm and said, ‘I've got my eye on you. You're getting there.’ I didn't know what to say, so I was like, ‘Thanks, Dad.’ He just made me feel gross.”



“You don't have to know the answer to every question. That's not how life works. We don't necessarily know what the fuck we're doing. We're just winging it. And that's how life is.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIELLE LEVITT

"Dingleberry," makes jokes about pants-shitting and responds to news that their grandmother drank the holy water in church with "At least she's hydrated."

Playing the laugh lines may seem to be a stretch for the 44-year-old Shannon—who lives in Brooklyn with his wife, actress Kate Arrington, and their two daughters, Sylvie and Marion—but it's business as usual for an actor accustomed to defying expectations. In just the past five years, his roles have ranged from Elvis Presley to Superman's archnemesis.

We sent Contributing Editor **Eric Spitznagel** to meet with Shannon in New York City. He reports: "I've known Shannon since the early 1990s, when he was still a teenager. He acted in a few plays that I co-wrote and directed in Chicago, at a theater in a crime-ridden neighborhood where an audience of three was considered a packed house. For this interview, we huddled in the corner of a restaurant in the Gramercy Park Hotel and drank several glasses of wine. Later, we went to the *Late Night With Seth Meyers* studio, where he was a guest, and after the show we drank another bottle of wine in his dressing room while talking jazz and theater with Common. Shannon is an imposing presence, six-three with gangly limbs, a bushy mustache (he grew it for a role, his first authentic facial hair in a movie) and a hardboiled detective's jawline. Regardless of what he's saying, there's an intensity to him—he orders food like he's trying to get a confession out of the waitress—and he has a super-dry sense of humor that's easy to miss if you're not paying attention. But if Shannon has a tendency to stare at you until you think his retinas are going to burn into your brain, it's only because, unlike a lot of actors, he seems more interested in listening than hearing the sound of his own voice.

"Just moments after we found our table, Shannon glanced at the menu and noticed a dish called Charred Suckling Pig Hearts. 'Are you kidding me?' he said. 'I want that. I want that so much.' It was not how I envisioned our interview beginning, but it also seemed weirdly perfect—like, if I randomly walked into a bar and sat down next to Shannon, this is exactly how it would go."

PLAYBOY: Eat a lot of hearts, do you?

SHANNON: Not really. I mean, I don't eat them regularly. I might if they were offered to me. This reminds me, when I was in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, back in 1997 I think it was, there was a scene where I'd carve my sister's heart out of her chest. We needed a heart, so I went down to the meatpacking district in Chicago. I got this cow heart and

brought it to the theater, and we covered it in fake blood and used it in the show.

PLAYBOY: Just one cow heart?

SHANNON: We could make a heart last for a few weeks. You don't want to keep it too long because then you're playing with fire. In this play, I was kissing the thing.

PLAYBOY: You kissed the heart?

SHANNON: Yeah. [pauses] With lots of tongue.

PLAYBOY: Here's the thing that almost never gets mentioned about you in the media: You're a funny guy.

SHANNON: I guess so. I think I have the capacity to make some people laugh.

PLAYBOY: Do you approach comedy and drama differently?



SHANNON: I approach everything differently. I don't have a system. I have my consciousness, my attention and I guess whatever muscle memory I've worked up over the years. I find categorization mundane. Who cares whether something is a drama or a comedy? Laughter leads to tears anyway, and tears lead to laughter. Everything in life is a circle.

PLAYBOY: When was the last time you had an uncontrollable giggle fit?

SHANNON: If I'm onstage and someone is really struggling with their lines, that makes me giggle. I have to bite my lip. Usually when things go wrong or fall apart, I find that funny.

PLAYBOY: You like the chaos?

SHANNON: I do, yeah. I'm incredibly amused by that movie *The Room*. An old friend of mine said that when I watched it for the first time, it was the hardest he's ever seen me laugh. I like watching things not work.

PLAYBOY: Do you want to do more comedy?

SHANNON: Sure. I don't know what that is. What would you classify as "more comedy"?

PLAYBOY: Comedy films.

SHANNON: Where the point is to make people laugh?

PLAYBOY: Yeah.

SHANNON: Your question is more org-anized than how I think about my career—or anything in my life, really. I don't know what I'll do in the future. I

don't know what's going to happen. It's not interesting to say, "Yes, I will do more comedy." What's interesting is to say, "I have no fucking idea what's going to happen next."

PLAYBOY: That takes bravery.

SHANNON: It does?

PLAYBOY: Sure it does. Most people want to know where they're heading. They want to prepare for their future, feel like they're in control.

SHANNON: I wish I could claim I felt courageous, but at this point it's the only way I'm capable of existing.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever feel scared when you show up on a movie set?

SHANNON: All the time, particularly on the first day. It's like the first day of school times a hundred.

PLAYBOY: Even though you've probably done it all before?

SHANNON: That doesn't make it easier.

PLAYBOY: What about shooting a sex scene? Does that get less terrifying the more you do it?

SHANNON: You never get used to sex scenes. Sex scenes are absurd, but in some ways they're just like real sex. They have all the fear, anxiety, sadness and loneliness—but with none of the pleasure.

PLAYBOY: Your first sex scene was with Kim Basinger in *8 Mile*, right?

SHANNON: That was like sky-diving. It was jumping out of a plane. But she was very nice to me, very kind.

PLAYBOY: How so?

SHANNON: She just had this look in her eyes. Everything about her was calm and reassuring. She was like, "It's going to be okay. It's fine. Don't worry about anything."

PLAYBOY: Was she picking up on your anxiety?

SHANNON: I don't know. Maybe. I was a child back then. Well, no, I don't want to make it sound like pedophilia or something.

PLAYBOY: You were 28 when that movie came out.

SHANNON: But in terms of life experience, I was out of my depth.

PLAYBOY: You did a sex scene with James Franco in 2011's *The Broken Tower*, and according to Franco it made you "un-

comfortable.”

SHANNON: Is that what he said? I was only uncomfortable because right before we shot it, James was eating a giant slice of pizza. He had tomato sauce all over his face, and his breath smelled like garlic. He was explaining how the sex scene was going to go, and I was like, “Could you not be eating pizza right now? Could you put that down, please?”

PLAYBOY: That’s not sexy.

SHANNON: That’s not sexy at all. We were shooting it over a pizzeria, so I understood. I’m sure he was hungry. I get it. But my main discomfort in that moment wasn’t the sex; it was the tomato sauce on his face.

PLAYBOY: You did another film with Franco, and he asked you to fuck a corpse.

SHANNON: That was our first film together. It was a short called *Herbert White*. I only agreed to do that because—well, it’s kind of a surreal story. I was in Boston, doing press for a movie and visiting my sister, and when I was waiting at the station for a train back to New York, I noticed this really weird-looking cat in a trench coat looking at me. He’s in a ball cap and big sunglasses and he’s got a big, bushy beard. From a distance he looked like a homeless person. He started walking toward me, and I’m thinking, Who the fuck is this guy? Then he gets right up in front of me and is like, “Hi, Mike. I’m James Franco.” In my head, I’m like, What’s happening right now? He says to me, “I’ve written a screenplay based on one of my favorite poems. It’s a short film, and I’d like you to star in it. It’s really dark and twisted. Would you consider doing that?”

PLAYBOY: Why was he so disheveled?

SHANNON: He was in Boston to get the Hasty Pudding award at Harvard or something. He was incognito. If I were him, I’d probably be incognito too. I think it was a real beard. [pauses] I think. I didn’t tug at it or anything.

PLAYBOY: You’re very loyal to directors. You’ve repeatedly appeared in films by Werner Herzog, Jeff Nichols and Franco. Why do you keep coming back to them? Do they just have the best scripts?

SHANNON: It’s not just the story. For me, it always come down to, Do I want to work with this person? I mean, if the script is absolute garbage, I won’t do it. But if I like the director and think they’re smart and have something interesting to say, that’s more likely to convince me than anything else.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel the same directors are less likely to typecast you? Can they be counted on to challenge you rather than pigeonhole you in predictable villain roles?

SHANNON: I never thought of it that way. The whole typecasting thing has been imposed on my psyche, but it’s never been a concern of mine. I’m aware of it only be-

cause other people bring it up. To me, it reeks of laziness, people not paying attention to what I’m doing. I think if you’re really paying attention, you’ll see what I’m talking about. Most people barely pay attention to anything. As an actor, you have to grab them by the lapels to make them sit up and notice you. And people who are good at doing that tend to get rewarded for it, unfortunately. I’m not going to play it that way.

PLAYBOY: Do you have a lot of interaction with fans? Do they walk up to you and say hello?

SHANNON: Sometimes. The one question I get a lot, which I find bewildering, is “You’re the actor, right? You’re the actor!” Yes, I am the actor. I do it all. Everything you watch, that’s me.

PLAYBOY: Do they have strong opinions about your characters—who they like, who they don’t?

SHANNON: I used to get that a lot during *Boardwalk Empire*. People would come over and say, “You’re so great as Van Alden. I hate him so much!”

PLAYBOY: Did that bother you?

SHANNON: It irritated me a little. I feel if you hate Van Alden, you aren’t getting the whole picture. Van Alden wasn’t a bad person, and nobody suffered more than he did. He tried, man; he tried. He was kind of like Job. Life kept throwing him curveballs. He couldn’t handle it.

PLAYBOY: When you spend enough time in a character’s skin, do you start to empathize with him?

SHANNON: Oh yeah, all the time. When I played Captain Beatty in *Fahrenheit 451*, about halfway through shooting I was like, “Maybe he’s right. Maybe people do know too much. Maybe people are better off not knowing anything.” I certainly see a lot of evidence of that in the empirical world. People are so overwhelmed and burdened with “knowledge” that they have absolutely no idea what to do with or about it. So maybe he’s got a point. Maybe ignorance is bliss.

PLAYBOY: But Beatty doesn’t seem that happy.

SHANNON: Sure. He’s in his own private hell. That’s the thing about all these people. The people I play—whatever reductive term you want to use, villains or whatever—they’re all in their own private shit box. They’re all suffering as much as any other human being on earth. Beatty is in agony. The only way he can function is to hold on to his worldview with white knuckles. It’s the only thing he has. He has no home, no family, nothing except his job and the voices in his head.

PLAYBOY: Does playing all these bad men and learning to see the world through their eyes make you more empathetic with bad

men in the real world?

SHANNON: I was talking to somebody today, and Harvey fucking Weinstein came up. I said something that, I don’t know, I’m starting to regret.

PLAYBOY: You weren’t defending him?

SHANNON: No! I think Harvey Weinstein is a terrible human being. I could never stand the guy. When I got in close proximity to him, I just didn’t feel good. He did not inspire good feelings in other people. I remember the first time I met him, at Chateau Marmont. I was there having dinner, and as I walked past his table, he grabbed my arm and said, “I’ve got my eye on you.”

PLAYBOY: Yikes.

SHANNON: And then he said, “You’re getting there.” I didn’t know what to say, so I was like, “Thanks, Dad.” He just made me feel gross.

PLAYBOY: Didn’t you make a movie for Weinstein that’s stuck in limbo now?

SHANNON: *The Current War*. He produced it, and we’re trying to sell it to somebody else, have another studio put it out. But the Weinstein Company won’t let go of it, and now it’s all tangled up in this legal bullshit. Probably nobody is ever going to fucking see the damn thing, and that makes me really sad. It’s a beautiful, relevant story, and I want people to see it. On one hand, I’m angry that this movie I love is probably going to disappear because of what this monster did. But on the other hand, after everything that happened...I feel sorry for him.

PLAYBOY: You feel sorry for Harvey Weinstein?

SHANNON: Listen, I know he’s terrible. He did a bunch of terrible shit. But the guy’s life is fucking over, man. He’s probably shattered, you know? Now I’m just waiting for the headline: MIKE SHANNON IS A HARVEY WEINSTEIN SYMPATHIZER.

PLAYBOY: No, I get it. You’re not saying he’s innocent, or even a good person. You’re just saying, as a human being, he must feel empty and alone.

SHANNON: I don’t know how he gets out of bed in the morning. Why does he bother? If I was him, I would just walk in front of a bus and end it. What’s he got to look forward to?

PLAYBOY: I’m sure they all feel that way. Kevin Spacey must be feeling pretty miserable right now.

SHANNON: I didn’t know Kevin very well. Some people think we’re friends, but we worked together for only five days on *Elvis & Nixon*. I’m sure he’s suffering, and I’m not sure if anyone’s reaching out to him. Those

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most of the time.*

guys, Kevin and Harvey and all the rest of them who've been accused, they're like untouchables now. They may deserve it; they may not deserve it. I don't know. But I wonder what's going on in their heads.

PLAYBOY: It's not all that different from how you approach your characters.

SHANNON: Yeah. I can't help it. A lot of what I do is empathy. That's what I do. I have empathy for other people. That's how I make a living. I try to see things from other people's points of view.

PLAYBOY: Does it make you more aware or sensitive to human suffering? Can you look across a crowded restaurant and say, "Oh yeah, that person over there, they're in pain"?

SHANNON: I don't know if I'm super clairvoyant that way. [scans the room] All these people seem so much happier than I am. Why is that?

PLAYBOY: That might change if they suddenly noticed a creepy guy with a mustache staring at them from across the room.

SHANNON: As he eats charred pig hearts. [pops another heart into his mouth]

PLAYBOY: Do you think the world's in trouble?

SHANNON: There are a lot of things happening right now that I find deeply unsettling and upsetting. I'm primarily worried about what's happening with the EPA. I think the environmental issues are paramount. If you can't breathe, who gives a shit about anything else? And then the thing that kills me is they get philanthropic with the money. They make all this money destroying shit, and then they give it away. The Koch ballet theater at Lincoln Center in New York is named after one of the Koch brothers.

PLAYBOY: Didn't you meet a Koch brother once?

SHANNON: Yeah. It was at the *Great Gatsby* premiere in New York. I think it was the more docile of the two. Someone introduced us, and he kind of looked frightened, actually. He looked like a deer in headlights. He was surrounded by artists. I didn't know enough at the time to punch him in his face, but I knew enough to be slightly horrified that we had shaken hands.

PLAYBOY: If you could go back and do it again, would you say something to him or actually punch him in the face?

SHANNON: What could I say? The thing is, he knows how terrible he is. If I said, "You know, what you're doing is not very nice," it's not like he would say, "Really? I didn't know that! This is such a surprise. If somebody would've told me, I would've stopped." He knows. They all know what they're doing.

PLAYBOY: You predicted that Trump was going to win long before it happened.

SHANNON: I did?

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PLAYBOY: In an interview for the *Chicago Tribune* in September 2015, you said, "He's going to win the election."

SHANNON: Well, sure. It had to happen. And here's the thing: I think it would've been a disaster either way. If Hillary had won, the shit would've hit the fan in a totally different way. There might have been a civil war or something crazy.

PLAYBOY: You really think that?

SHANNON: Well, they've got all the guns, apparently. For some of these people, the feeling about Hillary was kind of "Over my dead body." Well, now they've got their dream president, and they can see how that's worked out for us. A lot of them are still sticking to their guns, saying he's doing a good job. It's mystifying to me.

PLAYBOY: Do you think their minds can be changed?

SHANNON: Somebody who thinks Trump is doing a good job, there's no conversation to have with that person. I know they say you should reach across the aisle and all that crap, but to me it feels like putting your hand into a fan.

PLAYBOY: If or when they make a movie about the Trump presidency, who would you want to play?

SHANNON: Obviously I would be John Bolton, because of my mustache. No, I don't know. I honestly don't think I'd want to be in a movie about this administration. I wouldn't want anyone to make a movie about it. My preference would be that it just fade into nonexistence. I wouldn't want to memorialize it or celebrate it in any way.

PLAYBOY: Even if the film were critical?

SHANNON: It wouldn't matter. People feel the way they feel about Trump and his co-conspirators. It's like what I said about the Koch brothers: People know what's happening, and they feel one way or the other about it, and nothing you do is going to change

that.

PLAYBOY: There's no part of you that would want to play Donald Trump?

SHANNON: No.

PLAYBOY: Just to get inside his head? You talked about being fascinated with bad men who are suffering.

SHANNON: How do you mean? How is he suffering?

PLAYBOY: You don't think Trump struggles with demons?

SHANNON: He's having a blast! Are you fucking kidding me? That guy is having so much fun.

PLAYBOY: And there's no self-doubt or fear?

SHANNON: He's having the time of his fucking life. He doesn't even have to work. All the hard work that most people have to do to get to be president of the United States, he just skipped all that. The fucking guy doesn't even know what's in the Constitution. He doesn't have any grasp of history or politics or law or anything. He's just blindfolded, throwing darts at the side of a bus.

PLAYBOY: So Trump is where your capacity for empathy ends?

SHANNON: What is there to be empathetic toward?

PLAYBOY: What do you think is going through his head at four a.m. as he's lying in bed and staring at the ceiling?

SHANNON: He's probably thinking, I want some fucking pussy. I don't know. I'm not going to remotely contemplate the notion that Trump is capable of deep reflection.

PLAYBOY: In any form?

SHANNON: In any form! It doesn't happen. Fuck that guy. When he's alone with his thoughts, he's not capable of anything more complex than "I want some pussy and a cheeseburger. Maybe my wife will blow me if I tell her she's pretty."

PLAYBOY: You really don't think if you made a movie about Trump, as you perceive him

to be, that it would make any difference?

SHANNON: Probably not, no. People believe what they believe. I do believe in the arts' capacity to make people think. I believe that happens. Not all the time but most of the time.

PLAYBOY: What was the last movie that changed you or made you think about something in unexpected ways?

SHANNON: For an actor this is going to sound terrible, but a lot of times it's documentaries that do that to me.

PLAYBOY: Why is that?

SHANNON: The truth is much more interesting than fiction. When I'm in a movie about actual events, there's a terrible process where people take something that's intrinsically interesting and don't have enough faith in it to just leave it alone. So they mess with it, thinking they're making it more compelling, which inevitably doesn't happen. But in documentaries that's never going to happen. You have the real story, and you either care or you don't.

PLAYBOY: Do you go back and watch any of your movies, studying your plays like a quarterback?

SHANNON: No. I approach it the way I think Bob Dylan does. The past is the past, you know? He doesn't sit around listening to *Blonde on Blonde*. He could listen to it and think, Man, I did this; that thin, wild mercury sound is just so cool. But he doesn't. The tricky thing about acting is that the longer you do it, the more difficult it gets.

PLAYBOY: And yet you've spawned your own verb: *Shannoning*.

SHANNON: That has absolutely nothing to do with me. I did not originate that term. I don't even necessarily agree with it.

PLAYBOY: It came from Octavia Spencer, who acted with you in *The Shape of Water*. According to her, you had a reputation for nailing a scene in one take.

SHANNON: I don't know if that's true.

PLAYBOY: It was true enough for her that she created the word *Shannoning* to describe getting something so right the first time that you don't need to do it again.

SHANNON: But I never want to do just one take. I always want to do more. I guess sometimes what I do on the first take is plenty sufficient.

PLAYBOY: It seems like you tend to avoid overanalyzing or over-rehearsing a scene. You just want to do it and see what happens.

SHANNON: That is true. I do have a loathing for that kind of navel-gazing. I think a lot of times people are stalling when they do that. They're trying to make it less scary or something. But to me, it kills the moment. You don't have to know the answer to every question. That's not how life works. You and me sitting here, we're talking, and we don't necessarily know what the fuck we're doing. We're just winging it. And that's how life is.

PLAYBOY: And it's how you want acting to be?

SHANNON: Everyone wants it to be "This line means this and this moment means this." I'm comfortable not knowing what things mean. I don't feel that's my job, to know what things mean.

PLAYBOY: In terms of the story or the character you're playing?

SHANNON: All of it. Certainly the story. People always ask me, "What do you hope audiences will take away from this?" I don't mean to be rude, but are you really asking me that question? If I answer that, why would they need to watch the thing in the first place? They could just get my answer. For me, it's more experiential. It's about having an experience and realizing you have limited control over what that experience becomes.

PLAYBOY: You want that in your career and your life?

SHANNON: It's certainly the way I've lived my life. If I had some sort of plan, I wouldn't be here right now.

PLAYBOY: When you were 15, did you have any thoughts about your future?

SHANNON: At 15 I was living moment to moment. I wouldn't even have been interested in discussing my future. I knew I loved acting. When I started acting in Chicago, I loved it so much. You know; you were there. I would do anything. Anything, anywhere.

PLAYBOY: Nobody was more committed than you.

SHANNON: But I wasn't thinking that maybe one day this will lead to something. I was fortunate; I got some help from my dad when I really needed it. I had a safety net, which gave me the opportunity to have that attitude.

PLAYBOY: He gave you financial help?

SHANNON: There were times when, if I was really crashing and burning, he would bail me out. Which he could do, because he was a professor and they do all right.

PLAYBOY: There were rumors that when you started out you were sleeping in the park.

SHANNON: That paints a picture I'm not entirely comfortable with. I know Tracy Letts gets mad when I say that, because he's the one who put it out there. If and when that happened, it was very sporadic. I was not someone who needed to be worried about.

PLAYBOY: Did a part of you know it would all work out?

SHANNON: I didn't know anything. I was ambitious but only to an extent. I didn't move out to L.A. and put my head shot on everyone's windshield. I had no interest in leaving Chicago. People would move to L.A. or New York, and I thought they were crazy. I was having so much fun in Chicago. I knew if you moved to New York or L.A., scary things happened, like nobody hired you or you had to work some terrible day job.

PLAYBOY: That doesn't happen in Chicago?

SHANNON: Well, okay, people had to work

terrible day jobs in Chicago, but at least on the weekends you could go act in a play and tell a story and feel like you were exercising that part of yourself. I'll never forget when I went to L.A. once and saw these four actors I had tremendous respect for in Chicago, and they were all delivering pizzas. They were all in a parking lot, playing hacky sack and waiting for pizza delivery orders. I thought, This just isn't right.

PLAYBOY: You got into acting because you didn't want to play sports, right?

SHANNON: I was not an athlete, and I wanted something to do after school. I was living with my mom, down in Kentucky. They had a bulletin board at school with various activities, and one of them was speech team. That's how the whole thing started.

PLAYBOY: You did a monologue about boogers.

SHANNON: It's called "Booger Days," from *Lake Wobegon Days* by Garrison Keillor.

PLAYBOY: Did you know right away, "This is what I should be doing with my life"?

SHANNON: No. It wasn't like some woozy fever dream. It was just, This is kind of interesting. Some people know as soon as they're old enough to be conscious of themselves that they want to be actors. I had other thoughts about what I might end up doing.

PLAYBOY: Like what?

SHANNON: I thought architecture was interesting. And I always loved music. I played bass in the orchestra.

PLAYBOY: You still play in a band, right? Corporal.

SHANNON: Yeah, but it's hard to make a living from music. There are people who have devoted their whole lives to making music who don't make any money.

PLAYBOY: You skipped the Golden Globes ceremony earlier this year to sing Iggy Pop songs for a David Bowie tribute in Chicago. That sure sounds like a guy who'd rather be rocking than hanging out with actors.

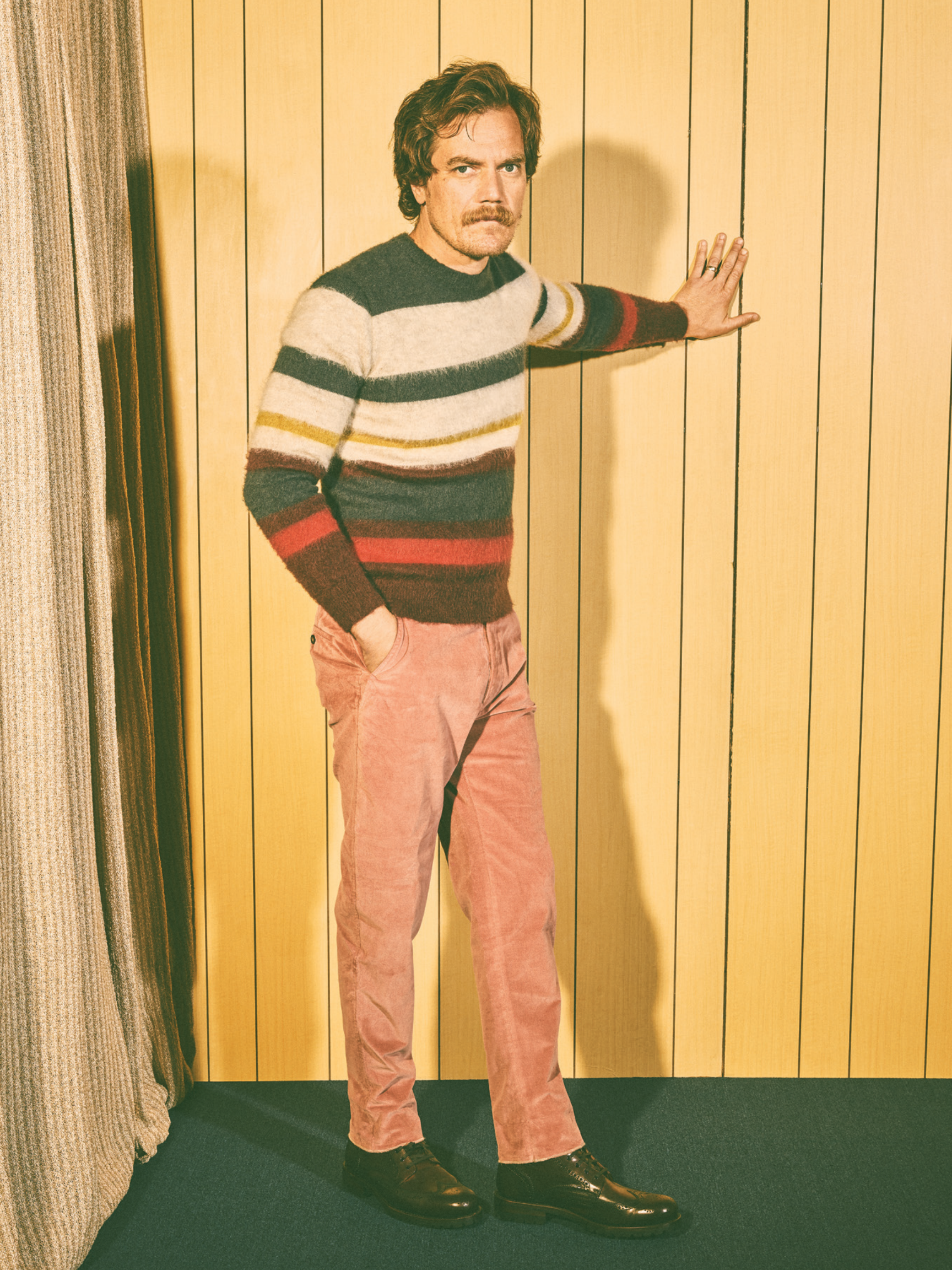
SHANNON: I did five songs as my feeble version of Iggy Pop, and when I came off the stage I felt like I was going to die. The real Iggy Pop does this for two hours a night on tour.

PLAYBOY: And he's in his 70s.

SHANNON: Right! I can't do that. My friend Matt Walker, who was drumming with us that night, told me a story about Iggy. Matt is Morrissey's drummer and goes on tour with him. Morrissey did a co-headlining thing with Iggy Pop at some sort of music festival, and Matt was watching from the wings. Iggy killed it, as he always does, because he's Iggy fucking Pop. After the show, these two guys had Iggy's arms around their shoulders and were dragging him back to the green room. Iggy was just depleted. He had nothing left.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever felt like that, utterly depleted, after an acting performance?

SHANNON: When I do theater. Doing eight shows a week is an adjustment. In Chicago we were lucky to get two shows a week. But



when I came to New York and started doing *Killer Joe* and *Bug*, that was eight shows a week, two on Saturday and two on Sunday. Between the Sunday matinee and the night show, I was usually like, "Please Lord, I can't do this anymore. I can't." I'd be on the floor in the fetal position, listening to Radiohead, losing my mind.

PLAYBOY: Doing a film isn't as exhausting?

SHANNON: People have a tendency to overreact in this business. They act like coming to a set and sitting around a trailer all day is hard work. It can be tedious sometimes, but it's not torture. Compared to, like, a Syrian refugee, our life is not that brutal. Actors can be babies.

PLAYBOY: Your parents sent you to therapy as a kid.

SHANNON: My dad did, yeah. But that was unrelated to acting in any way, shape or form.

PLAYBOY: What was it related to?

SHANNON: I had been jostled about a fair amount in my childhood, back and forth. I was feeling a little discombobulated. It wasn't like I was hearing voices or anything.

PLAYBOY: But you did apparently trash your therapist's office once.

SHANNON: Well, yeah, but I don't think that's the makings of any thrilling saga. There are children doing that as we speak. There are children being unruly and unwieldy and expressing themselves in outlandish ways all over the city of New York at this exact moment.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever tapped into that adolescent anger in one of your roles?

SHANNON: Not really, no. It was such a long time ago. I'm nothing like that anymore. I'm a totally different person.

PLAYBOY: I don't mean for you. I mean if you're playing a character with a lot of anger, do you draw on memories of your own anger as a teen?

SHANNON: Never. I rely on my consciousness, and my consciousness is composed of all my life experiences. I'm sure something akin to what you're describing takes place, but do I sit down and say, "Oh, this scene in *What They Had* is like the time I got fired from Homer's Ice Cream for throwing a pickle at a customer"? No, I don't do that.

PLAYBOY: So when it's over, you just clock out like it's any other job?

SHANNON: It's not about emotions for me—at least not anymore. Maybe in the beginning, when I was a kid, it was more of that. "I'm going to express my emotions

all over the place! All over you!" It's really not about that anymore for me. Now it's just about asking, What's the story? What is this about? What does it mean? What could it mean potentially?

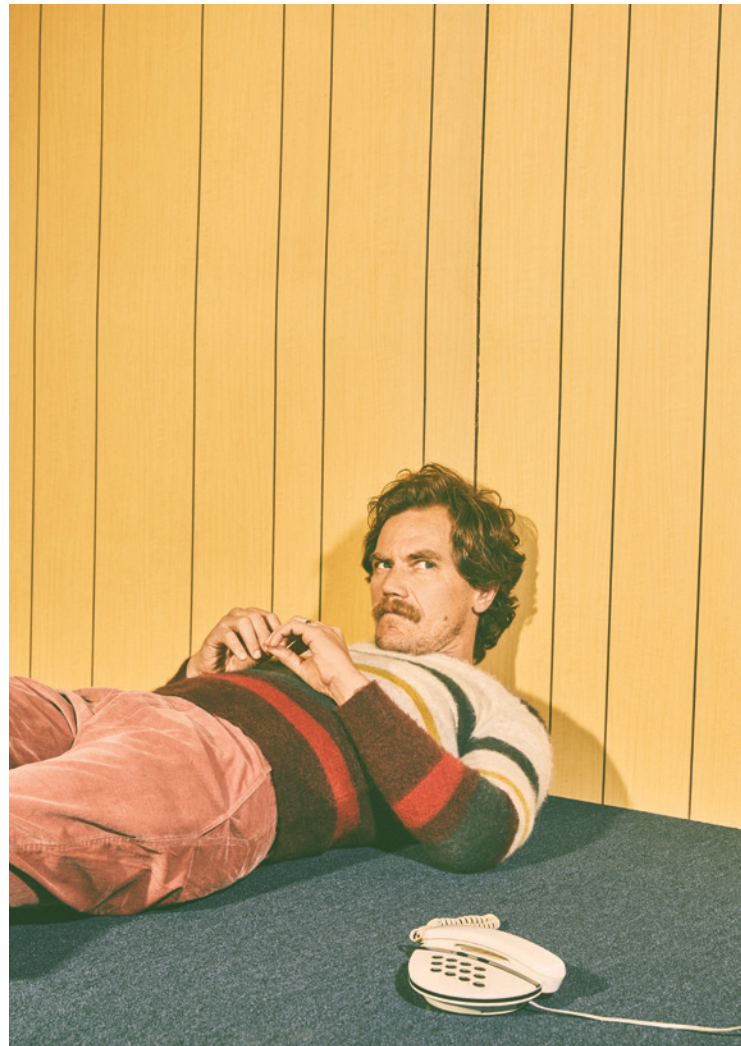
PLAYBOY: That sounds so cold and analytical.

SHANNON: It's much more analytical. I don't think acting is ultimately a good way to deal with your own emotions.

PLAYBOY: There's a scene in *What They Had* where your character is crying over the death of his father.

SHANNON: Well, okay, okay.

PLAYBOY: Your own dad passed away, so I



thought maybe——

SHANNON: Fine, yes, that's one rare instance when I do bring myself into it. Of course you want to think about the people you love who you've lost if you're portraying that on camera. But when it's over, when the director says "Cut," I get up and go get a cup of coffee. I don't stay there on the sidewalk, wailing and rolling around on my back. I think about it enough to tell that particular beat, to accomplish that scene, and then when it's over I get up and walk away.

PLAYBOY: Is acting satisfying to you?

SHANNON: Most days it can be. And some

days when you're working it's just, "I want to go home. I want to get the fuck out of here." But that's like anybody. [pauses] I remember one time I was doing a play at the Public Theater in New York, *The Little Flower of East Orange*, and Philip Seymour Hoffman was directing. The main prop in the play was a hospital bed, because my character's mother, who was played by Ellen Burstyn, was in the hospital. We had this bed in the rehearsal room. One day we took a lunch break and everybody split, but I didn't typically go anywhere for lunch; I'd just look at my script out in the hallway. So I'm out there, and I walk back into the rehearsal

hall, and Phil is there all by himself. He's just lying on the hospital bed in the middle of the room, staring at the ceiling. I walk up to him and I'm like, "Are you okay?" He just kind of blinks. And finally he says, "You know, Shannon, one day you're going to know what I'm feeling right now."

PLAYBOY: What did you say?

SHANNON: I didn't know what to say, but in my head I was like, Shit. Then he says to me, "Sometimes I wish I could change my name and just drive away and go work in a gas station somewhere, where nobody knows who I am. Just disappear."

PLAYBOY: Why do you think he needed that?

SHANNON: You get to a certain point, like he did, and everybody wants something from you. People loved Phil. Everyone was like, "Phil, Phil, Phil, we need Phil!" I think he just felt overwhelmed. When he told me about wanting to disappear, I imagine he'd probably just gotten off the phone with his agent and there were like 10 offers pending. "Have you read this script? What do you think about that? I really think you should do this." Meanwhile

he's trying to direct this play his friend wrote. You can't even have the experience you're having right now because somebody is constantly asking what you want to do a month from now.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel the same way?

SHANNON: People ask me, "Don't you ever say no?" Yeah, I say no all the fucking time. If I wanted, every minute of my life could be accounted for. My next three years could be totally booked up. And then you're just crossing shit off a list. It sounds obnoxious to complain about that, because isn't it the dream? But some days you just want to

have a cup of coffee and go for a walk. You don't want to go to the set and do the scene where the thing blows up or your dad dies or whatever. You just want to hang out. [pauses and stares out window] It's certainly not the way it used to be. I've had a lot of really good, worthwhile experiences. But you get tired. I don't know how long I can keep doing it.

PLAYBOY: What do you do when you get tired?

SHANNON: I try to take breaks. There were a couple of years when it kind of got out of control. I was going from one thing to the next. But it's not so bad now. The work is demanding, but the part where you're not working is demanding too. The part where you're just a dad and you're taking the kids to school and doing the dishes and washing the laundry and cleaning the litter box and taking out the garbage. They're both demanding. They're demanding in different ways, but they're both demanding. I still get rejuvenated by being at home.

PLAYBOY: Would you ever quit acting?

SHANNON: I don't know. It scares me because it's my job, and I have responsibilities. If I quit, I'm not exactly sure how I would make a living. Sometimes I think we should just stop making movies altogether. Not only me, the whole industry.

PLAYBOY: Stop making movies entirely?

SHANNON: I think we'd all be better off. It's distracting us from stuff we really need to be dealing with. No matter what kind of movie you make, it's ultimately an escape. That's what movies are: an escape.

PLAYBOY: People would still be staring at their phones.

SHANNON: Yeah, that's true. I don't know what to do about that.

PLAYBOY: You're not on Twitter, Facebook, any of it.

SHANNON: I don't do social media. I wish I could say it's hard for me to restrain myself, but it's not. I don't understand people's fascination with it. I wish I could claim it was some sort of heroic gesture on my part, but I'm simply not interested. Who fucking cares?

PLAYBOY: I notice you've upgraded from your usual flip phone.

SHANNON: I literally couldn't get a flip phone. My provider wouldn't give me one, so I had to get this. [picks his iPhone up off the table like it's a turd] But honestly, it doesn't fucking matter. I use it the same way I use the flip phone. If I need to make a call or text somebody, I do that. But I don't get internet on this. I don't have wi-fi. I can't get e-mails. I don't have games. Until I met Kate, I didn't have a cell phone. It used to be if you wanted

to get hold of me, you had to call Red Orchid. When my girlfriend before Kate and I broke up, she left this nasty message on the answering machine at Red Orchid about my stinky feet. That was a little embarrassing.

PLAYBOY: Were your feet the reason the relationship didn't work?

SHANNON: No, she was just mad at me. I'd broken up with her. It was fated to end, let's put it that way. Ultimately she was angry and had to get in

one more dig at me. My point is, when Kate and I started seeing each other, she asked me if I would get a cell phone, and I did. And that was that.

PLAYBOY: You've been with Kate since 2006.

SHANNON: It's the longest relationship I've had in my life.

PLAYBOY: Did you think you'd make it this long?

SHANNON: It's not anything I'd ever env-

**Sometimes
I think we
should just
stop making
movies
altogether.**

sioned for myself, but here it is.

PLAYBOY: You didn't grow up with good marriage role models. Both of your parents got married five times.

SHANNON: I don't think there's any guarantee, just because your folks stayed married for 70 years, that you're going to know what the fuck to do with another human being. You're not them, and they're not you. You don't have to be like your parents. It's such an arbitrary thing, how and why relationships work. You could get all the lessons you want, but that doesn't mean you won't fuck it up somehow. I guess I learned a little of what not to do. My mom married people and tried to fix them. That's never a good idea. My dad figured it out on his last go-around. He was with his last wife until he passed away, and she's still very much a part of my life. She's a sweet woman. She's coming to New York this weekend to watch the kids.

PLAYBOY: Other than getting a cell phone,

did you change at all for Kate?

SHANNON: I've had to change a little bit here and there. [pauses] I bought a house. That was a big change for me.

PLAYBOY: You didn't want to own property?

SHANNON: We have a place in Chicago, but buying in Red Hook was something we just avoided. It was mostly on me.

PLAYBOY: What made you change your mind?

SHANNON: We would look at houses from time to time because my wife really wanted to get a house. We'd go on these spurts of looking at 10 or 15 different houses, and I'd be like, "I don't want to get any of these." They would go away, a year would go by, and then she'd get obsessed again. I'd be like, "Nope, I don't like any of these." I just thought I could keep her at bay indefinitely.

PLAYBOY: What didn't you like about the houses?

SHANNON: I don't know. It was just a feeling. When I walked into them, I was always like, "This isn't my house. Someone else lives here."

PLAYBOY: You know the other people move out when you buy it, right?

SHANNON: It just feels weird. It gives me the heebie-jeebies.

PLAYBOY: What made you feel okay with the house you eventually bought?

SHANNON: I don't know. I walked in and just immediately felt, Oh, okay, I could live here.

PLAYBOY: How did you become a parent?

SHANNON: Are you honestly asking me that question? Come on, we all know how it works. This is playboy, for Christ's sake.

PLAYBOY: I don't mean the fun part. How did you make the decision? Was it like getting a house? You avoid and avoid and avoid, and one day it inexplicably feels okay to make that leap.

SHANNON: It was not... How do I talk about this? We weren't... It just... We rolled with the punches, let's put it like that.

PLAYBOY: Ah. There were no "Are we ready?" conversations?

SHANNON: No.

PLAYBOY: So you Shannoned it?

SHANNON: [Laughs] I guess I did.

PLAYBOY: If there's a common thread running through your life and career, it sounds like your philosophy is "Let's not plan for anything; we'll just figure it out as we go."

SHANNON: That's it, man. You hit the nail on the head. People ask me what my five-year plan is, what projects I want to do. I don't think that way. It's how I've always been. It's the way I'm capable of coping with existence—with the fact that I'm alive. 🙌



INTERNATIONAL WOMAN

*The
Girl
From
Oz*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ALI MITTON**





Aussie stunner **Anthea Page** glides from the pool to the sheets
—and leaves us praying for summer









"I need to set the standards to my men so they would see that I'm really serious in what we're doing,"





MAN OF THE MONTH

BONG NEBRIJA

MMDA Task Force Special Operations commander Bong Nebrija is, for all intents and purposes, a man of action – be it handing out traffic tickets to violators, clearing the streets of Metro Manila, or setting a high bar for law enforcement in the country.

BY **PAUL WENCESLAO**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PLAYMATE ARA PARAISO**

Many of us see him in the news regularly or know of his exploits as they often get circulated around social media. He may not be the official spokesperson of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), but he serves as an ideal mouthpiece to an agency gradually reclaiming a positive image after years of being pinned down with allegations of enforcers not doing their jobs or taking bribes from motorists, among others. Task Force Special Operations commander Edison “Bong” Nebrija is leading his men by example, and has been largely successful in doing so.

In his two years in the MMDA, Bong has fostered a change in culture within his team that has rippled through the entire agency,

which in turn, could potentially instill discipline in the riding public, street vendors, and entitled individuals who think they are above the law.

“I need to set the standards to my men so they would see that I’m really serious in what we’re doing,” he says. “There’s this force in the MMDA right now that is so serious in the implementation of their mandate, and that’s how [the public is] getting to know the MMDA now. *Wala nang papogi.*”

True enough, the former Navy colonel has dealt with multitudes of traffic violators, which include a prosecutor, a policeman, a diplomat, and a slew of public officials. Not even his friends and family are spared from receiving a traffic ticket



or getting their vehicles towed if they commit road infractions, a fact that has brought a ton of potentially awkward moments to the hard-nosed commander.

"There was a time when a member of my forces called me because they were towing the vehicle of my cousin," he narrates in Filipino. "I called him and said, 'Why did you call me? Do relatives get a free pass in our operations?' He said no so I told him to proceed with what they were doing."

Strict as he is in enforcing the law, Bong is open enough to understand that the average traffic violator does not really want to break the law nor are they criminals; rather, some infractions can be attributed to convenience or someone just having a bad day on the road. Take the case of the Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutor who had a row with the commander and his men, which went viral on social media and was covered by the news. The prosecutor and her husband engaged Bong in a heated argument when she refused to give up her license upon committing a parking violation, leading the MMDA to file a complaint to the DOJ.

"The next day, the couple came to the office to apologize. As they were approaching, I told them, 'You do not need to apologize to me. We can all succumb to a bit of stress and our emotions will get the best of us. *Nangyayari sa inyo yun. Nangyayari sa akin yun.* It's just that *mali lang talaga yung nangyari sa atin kahapon,*'" he recounts.

Bong exercises the same level of patience when dealing with illegal vendors. He visits the problem areas on a day-to-day basis, knowing for a fact that some of them will return by the time he leaves. Instead of hiding in a concealed area and then pinning them down the moment they return, he opts to just return frequently so as to change their behavior. He also converses with them and gets to know them on a personal level just so he can explain why clearing operations are necessary and why it is illegal to sell on the sidewalks. For Bong, a change in mindset will keep the public's actions within the bounds of the law.

Beneath his tough demeanor and verbose approach to apprehensions, however, lies a man who had to buck the odds to effect change within his team and, by extension, his organization. Task Force Special Operations, initially, was an ad hoc team that lacked personnel and funding. All it had – when it started – was a military man and his indomitable vision.

"I had to source my men from other teams, and who do you think will they give? *Yung ibibigay nila yung pala-absent, hindi sumusunod, at yung matitigas ang ulo.* We all had to undergo retraining," Bong shares. "The first real challenge is not to clear the road, but to actually educate the team to have one idealism, one standard of integrity. I told them, '*Lalabas tayo at magdidisiplina tayo ng tao, pero hindi tayo disiplinado. Hindi naman pu-puwede iyun,*'" he adds.

Bong now leads a well-organized unit that is raising the standard of law enforcement in the country. His efforts have been recognized by an award giving body in World Class Philippines. Rather than accepting the award, however, his entire team ended up receiving the distinction. In his mind, it was never really about Bong Nebrija. It's all about binding a group of individuals together with the ideology of discipline, fairness, and proper law enforcement. He is no immortal, but the same cannot be said for what he stands for. 🇵🇭



PLAYBOY'S PARTY JOKES

Streaming your homemade sex videos to an 82-inch 4K television is a great way to make your manhood look larger than life. It's also a great way to get thrown out of Best Buy.

August is named after the emperor Augustus because he logged many of his greatest triumphs in that month. So it seems only fair that we change the name of the 10th month of the year from October to Reggie Jackson.



Virtual-reality porn: for when you really want to know what it feels like to be in a sparsely decorated split-level house in the San Fernando Valley.

A survey of male college students revealed that 20 percent of respondents had masturbated in a classroom or library. In a related survey, 100 percent of college janitors said they want a fucking raise.

Sex is like pizza: We simply cannot agree on whether a pineapple should be involved.

WEDDING JOKES

Comedian, actor, author and former strip-club DJ Jimmy O. Yang is in the house to warm you up for the forthcoming *Crazy Rich Asians* movie with a few thoughts on bachelor parties:

What do you call a bachelor party with no strippers? An intervention.

To all the newlyweds: If one of you slept around the night before your wedding, don't call it cheating; just think of it as the last meal.

We couldn't afford strippers for my bachelor party, so my friends and I covered ourselves in body glitter and cheap perfume just to make our ladies jealous.

The last thing I remember from my bachelor party is taking a shot of tequila. So I'm having my honeymoon early. In Tijuana. Without my wife. In the trunk of a car.

Always invite your fiancée's brother to your bachelor party. Then make him smoke PCP like Denzel in *Training Day* so he can't implicate you in any crimes committed.

Bachelor parties are the price women pay for weddings. Weddings are the price men pay for bachelor parties.

My fiancée was crystal clear about my bachelor party: no getting screwed for money. So I said, "In that case, we're firing our wedding photographer and our caterers."

For my friend's bachelor party, we spent the weekend in Napa Valley wine tasting, antiquing and horseback riding through the vineyards. Everything was arranged by the best man, who has since been demoted to worst woman.

A groom slept with the stripper at his own bachelor party, resulting in a canceled wedding and an awful Yelp review for the stripper.

Welcome to the Backhanded Compliment Club! It's great meeting so many people who don't care how they look.

There are two types of people in this world: good ones, and the ones who text you the words Call me.

Strip clubs in the hipster haven of Portland, Oregon offer vegan buffets. That would ex-



Jimmy O. Yang

plain the patrons who have been seen ducking into the restrooms to beat their meat substitute.

A female doctor has to deliver some bad news to a patient. "I'm sorry, Mr. Levin, but you'll never have intercourse again." Stunned, the man asks, "What is it, doctor? My prostate? An STD? Tell me!" The doctor shakes her head. "No, no. You see, I matched with you on Tinder, and any grown man who lists Pokémon as an interest will never get laid." 🙄



ASIAN BEAUTY

*Southern
Hospitality*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JJ MAGHIRANG
WORDS BY PAUL WENCESLAO



Asian Beauty Kristine Peralta was looking to find us a room at the Palladium Hotel in Coron. She would soon find herself in her very first shoot as a Playboy model.



ASIAN BEAUTY

This issue takes us on location to Coron, Palawan, one of the most visually appealing places in the archipelago. We initially thought that the province's beauty – punctuated by breathtaking coves and majestic sandbars – was exclusive to its topographical features in the way one attempts to form a definition by simply viewing a few postcards. Boy were we mistaken! The very first attraction that we laid eyes on was standing behind the counter of the Palladium Hotel's reception. Her name is Kristine Peralta.

Our eyes met hers. We checked her out. She checked us in. We took the chance to ask if she is ready to share her beauty beyond the island region. She took the chance to introduce our lensmen to her every asset – with scenic Ditaytayan Island as the chosen backdrop – and the experience is nothing short of paradise-like.

"My face is the first thing that makes me feel sexy," Kristine tells us upon wrapping up her pictorial. "To be honest, I think I'm not as sexy as the other girls I've seen here, but I

tionists seriously and dreams of opening her own business and owning her own house someday, on top of her now budding career in modeling. Knowing that success eludes those who do not take the leap, she has made it a habit to grab every viable opportunity that comes along her way while maintaining her day job, which led her to this pictorial – her debut as a model.

"Just continue dreaming. It's free. Stand up, let yourself shine, and do everything to achieve all your dreams and goals in life. Fight for them if you must," she proclaims, insisting that with perseverance, no goal is too lofty.

Fittingly, Kristine prefers a man who can match her drive not just with work, but in making the relationship flourish as well. Believing that love is written in the stars or on threads that make up the fabrics of our intertwining lives, she has faith that destiny will lead her to her other half, the man who will seamlessly integrate himself into her routines in the way fingers slide into the gaps of a lover's hands.

As a partner, she is steadfast, and will stay on through life's

***"Just continue dreaming. It's free. Stand up, let yourself shine,
and do everything to achieve all your dreams and goals in life.
Fight for them if you must."***

try to maintain my figure through exercise and by having a proper diet."

Clearly, modesty is one of our Asian Beauty's traits as we can all see that she owns an alluring, bosomy frame coupled with a sweet and cheerful visage. Her piercing eyes can send any man to his knees, begging for her favorable attention or for her to notice him at the very least. Beyond physical assets, however, Kristine believes that sexiness is drawn from within.

"Personality makes a woman sexy and the way she presents herself to others. Being confident and having a pleasant attitude are more important than good looks," she opines.

Kristine takes her work as one of Palladium Hotel's recep-

ebbs and flows. As a date, she does not long for fancy trips and extravagant meals – the currency of romance is to be distributed through words and gestures.

"An ideal date for me is a simple one. It is enough for me to genuinely enjoy his company. Where we will spend the day is not an issue," she bares.

As we head back to the hotel, Kristine is looking to end the night early. After all, another busy stretch behind the counter at the reception area is ahead of her. She became a model when she met us a while ago. Tomorrow, she could end up becoming a local celebrity, an emerging entrepreneur, or nothing out of the ordinary could occur. Regardless, no day is deemed listless by this upbeat soul. 









A full-page photograph of a woman with long, dark hair, wearing a light-colored, strapless swimsuit. She is standing on a sandy beach with the ocean and a clear blue sky in the background. She is holding a large, vibrant green leaf in front of her torso. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting a sunny day. The overall mood is serene and elegant.

*"My face is the first thing that
makes me feel sexy."*



20Q

SOFIA BOUTELLA

Born in Algeria, raised in France and honed to lethal sharpness on stadium stages, the actress, dancer and erstwhile lick of Tom Cruise's face takes on her edgiest project yet

Q1: With *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, *The Mummy* and *Atomic Blonde*, you've earned a reputation for playing characters that are sexy and deadly in equal measure. Do you enjoy taking on seductive roles?

BOUTELLA: I feel great about it. We all have sexuality. I recognize traits in myself and I use them for the characters. I wouldn't do penetrative sex; I think that would be a bit too much. But at the same time, other people have done it—like in the Gaspar Noé movie *Love*, they had real sex. If people want to explore having sex for real, I'm not judging it. I don't mind proximity or intimacy. Even licking Tom Cruise's face in *The Mummy* was fun. He kept saying to the makeup artist, "Make sure to clean my face. It's fake dirt and fake sweat, so make sure it's clean for Sofia!" It was so sweet. We laughed a lot during that scene.

Q2: When *Atomic Blonde* came out last year, the media made a big deal about your sex scenes with Charlize Theron. Did that bother you?

BOUTELLA: It was not annoying, but why is it such a big deal to see people having sex? You see people kill each other on-screen all the time. That's not a big deal; they're just movies. People are giving Noé shit for having so much sex in his films. Why put so much energy into that? What's wrong with sex?

Q3: Noé also sequenced what is probably cinema's longest and most brutal rape scene, in his 2002 film *Irréversible*. Now you're starring in his new film, *Climax*. Were you nervous about working with him?

BOUTELLA: He didn't glorify rape. It's controversial, but he's still very talented. I love that movie. It's a hard watch, but you know what? It makes you feel something. I was nervous to work with him, but not because of that; I was terrified of not understanding the character I was playing. I studied him before *Climax*. I spoke with him about the recurring themes of violence, sex and drugs. He said that he's fascinated with people using drugs. In *Climax*, I play a choreographer, and we're spiked with large amounts of LSD. First of all, I was turned off because I did not want to dance; I hadn't done it in five years. And I've never done LSD.

Q4: Was it exciting to research mind-altering drugs?

BOUTELLA: Have you heard about Flakka? It's the worst fucking drug. According to the nurses I talked to, it's more fatal than heroin. I watched these videos: This guy was high, killed someone and was eating the person's face. It was the scariest thing I'd ever seen. I did *Climax* without drinking or indulging in any substances at all. I didn't want to alter my state of mind. I could never try

meth or anything, because I would love that shit.

Q5: You've mentioned being hyperactive. Do you still struggle with ADHD?

BOUTELLA: Yes, but I'm good at hiding it. I have trouble focusing. I think if I'd grown up here, I would have been diagnosed. When I was a kid, my grandmother would put all the porcelain vases away because I was a tornado. I was exhausting for everybody, even myself. My teachers always told my mom I wasn't paying attention. It was hard for me to listen to the same person talk for hours on end. I still catch myself thinking about something else. If I'm reading a book, which I love to do, it's really hard. I will back up and read a line, then read it again, even if it takes me longer. I always think, What's going on with me? But I have a lot of energy!

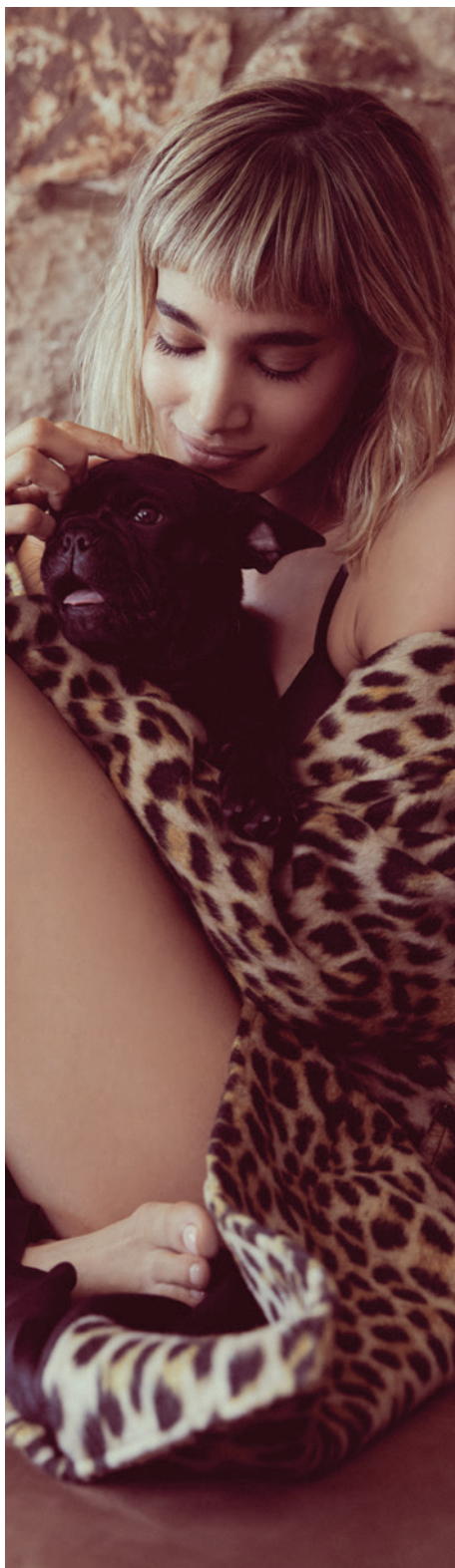
Q6: Were you a troublemaker growing up?

BOUTELLA: I went through a phase. It was never anything dangerous. When I was a kid in Algeria, we were not poor, but I wore the same clothes all the time. I had a few outfits and one pair of shoes. When I moved to France, I realized I was not cool, and kids made fun of me for it. From 10 to 15 years old, I was picked on. They made fun of my lips because they were big. The kids would pucker their lips and make fun of how I spoke. It wasn't a

BY **DANIEL BACHER** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PATRICK MAUS**



WOMEN MATTER. YOU NEED TO BE A FEMINIST. IF YOU'RE NOT, GO FUCK YOURSELF.



great feeling. Then I went straight into dancing and the arts; that's what made me feel good. You can be valued because you're talented, and you're respected no matter what. I felt like I fit in there. It saved my life.

Q7: *Was your parents' divorce difficult for you?*

BOUTELLA: I was four years old when they split. My dad was already in France. I didn't see him much when I was young. It was tough not having him around, but he came back to Algeria to help us move. I came home from school one day and the house was empty. I had no idea. When it happened, there was a civil war going on in Algeria. There was no water running through the faucets, and we had a curfew of seven p.m. It was brutal. My dad is a composer and a public figure there. He was very opinionated, but if you voiced your opinions about the situation in Algeria, you would get killed. It was too dangerous for my mom and me to stay. It was also dangerous to leave, so we had to sneak out. But I wasn't scared; I was excited.

Q8: *You didn't drink alcohol until you were 28 years old. Why?*

BOUTELLA: Once, when I was 14, my mom was on a work trip and I was home alone. She always made crepes with some sort of rum or hard liquor. I was curious, so I started drinking by myself. I drank to the point that I made myself sick and puked in the middle of the living room. I had to clean it all up. My mom never knew. On my first tour with Madonna, I never drank alcohol. Then on my second tour, I thought, I want to have fun and explore these things! I remember we went to Noble in New York, and I had a glass of champagne. The next day I was hungover.

Q9: *You toured with Madonna for 10 years. Did you ever have that moment when you thought, I'm dancing with one of the biggest artists in the world?*

BOUTELLA: She's the best! I loved dancing together. I own a copy of the playboy issue with Madonna on the cover. I was at a record store in Algeria with my father when I was six years old, and I picked out Tina Turner, Madonna's *Like a Virgin* and Michael Jackson's *Bad*. I listened to Madonna on a red cassette player with a yellow microphone all the time. I destroyed the Michael Jackson tape from listening so much. I had no idea how big they were; it was just my jam. I remember asking my mom, "Why doesn't Madonna marry Michael Jackson? He's the best and she's the best."

Q10: *You were cast to be on Michael Jackson's This Is It tour, but he passed away before you ever got to dance with him. Were you at least able to meet him?*

BOUTELLA: I want to cry now just thinking about it. I was on tour with Madonna, but we had a hiatus of five months. I was sent a personal invitation

to audition for him, and I just knew I had to go. I did not think I was going to get picked; I'm not very good at auditioning. But I got a callback the next day. I was in my fourth round, and then Kenny Ortega, the choreographer, called my name. It immediately broke my heart, because I was like, I'm fucked. I didn't want to let Madonna down. We decided I would work with Michael after her tour. I was driving down Sunset Boulevard when I got a surprise call from him. I pulled over and he said, "Hey, Sofia, I just want you to know that you're an amazing dancer. God blessed you, really, God blessed you, and I really want you in my show. We will make that work." It meant so much to me. Soon after, he passed away. It was so tragic.

Q11: *You spent two years jobless in Los Angeles before booking Kingsman: The Secret Service. How did you manage?*

BOUTELLA: I literally woke up one morning and I didn't want to dance anymore. I was terrified. I didn't care about being fancy; I just wanted to pay my rent. It's all I cared about. Then my agent fired me and I cried so much. I was so broke my dad had to help me a few times. I started housekeeping and living off savings. It took me another year before I booked *Kingsman*. They loved my audition, and the next day, I woke up to a message saying to pack all my stuff: I was leaving for London that afternoon for a second audition. The director, Matthew Vaughn, read two scenes with me and said, "All right, I'm happy." I called my parents right away. They needed the news more than I did.

Q12: *Why was Tom Cruise a mentor to you on The Mummy?*

BOUTELLA: He taught me a lot on set. It's observing his dedication. His acting is what taught me the most. He would tell me at length about lenses and anamorphic format and all that sort of technical stuff. I thought, Oh my God, he knows all this shit, and I know nothing. He would never just sit in his chair and watch. He was always hands-on. He was also always early to set. If I were the director, I would love to work with people like him.

Q13: *You did a #TimesUp post on Instagram about wearing black to support women. What does the movement mean to you?*

BOUTELLA: It means a lot. I was proud to be part of the 5050x2020 movement at Cannes, where Cate Blanchett spoke about equality for women. Women need to be respected. Women are strong, valuable and important. Women matter. When I was younger, I was working on a commercial, and there was a producer who was seducing me. I was naive. I was told to go grab a bite with him. I thought the entire crew was coming, but then I was sitting there and seeing weird behavior from him. I had to face that. We need the movement in order to make a difference, and it needs to be strong. We need to voice

it as loud as we can until everything is equal. I first heard about feminism when I was quite young; I didn't know what it meant or understand the importance of it. Now that I'm more educated, I know that you need to be a feminist. If you're not, go fuck yourself.

Q14: *Have you ever feared for your life?*

BOUTELLA: I had a stalker. We dated when I was 24, and he stalked me for two years after we broke up. Once, at two a.m., I was driving down the highway and he was following me. I was shaking. As I was trying to get away, my car spun uncontrollably. I hit a tree and the car ended up upside down. The moment I opened my eyes, I took a breath, went straight to unbuckle the seatbelt and crawled out of the car. A woman grabbed me and started praying to Jesus. I was like, "What's going on?" I had a piece of glass in my eye. I was so shocked. See, again, this is men thinking they can do whatever the fuck they want with women. This guy would control my life with fear. Fuck that shit.

Q15: *Algeria recently expelled more than 13,000 migrants. It has been reported that people were left to travel across the Sahara, often at gunpoint, without money, food or water. Did that have a personal resonance for you?*

BOUTELLA: It's a tough one. My dad always goes back to do projects there and is working on a documentary now. He has revolted against what's going on. It breaks my heart. I remember when I was a kid, people would always knock on my grandparents' door. They were from the south, and they would ask to do work in exchange for food and a place to sleep after a long journey. My grandmother would always say yes. Every time I came to visit, there would be a new person staying there. We got lucky and left under different circumstances. Imagine the people who are less fortunate. It's not normal to me, and something needs to be done.

Q16: *The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Trump's travel ban, even after the disgrace of separating children from their families at the border. As an immigrant, what are your thoughts?*

BOUTELLA: It's depressing and it's awful. I'm an immigrant coming from Algeria to France and then to America. I can't believe what's being done, and it's not okay. You know, I feel very weird: For a long time, I have felt bad that I got to live in France and then America. Every time something good happened to me, it would always be laced with guilt. It's why I can't be interviewed in Algeria. I can't sit across from someone and have such a strong opinion and not say it. That's why I try to be careful.

Q17: *Let's get back to your personal life. What does love mean to you?*

BOUTELLA: It's about sharing on a deep



level. It's important when I feel it. I think we are all driven by that. That's why people do the craziest things ever. That's why people built the Taj Mahal—for a feeling. I don't search for it; I've always been baffled and surprised by it. It's interesting, because when I was growing up, I thought life is great: You meet people, you go on a journey, then you meet someone else. You change boyfriends. That's normal. When I was 28, I thought, I want something else. I want to value it. I love strongly.

Q18: *How do you identify sexually?*

BOUTELLA: I don't like labels. I love people. I have had more men in my life. I've never been in a relationship with a woman, but I wouldn't be surprised if I do. If I feel it, I'll be honest with it. Am I heterosexual? I guess. Who knows? I

think I feel more attracted to men. I've kissed women. It was fun. I fall in love with people all the time, but I've never been in love with a woman. I'm sexual, and it shouldn't be taboo to talk about it.

Q19: *Are you single?*

BOUTELLA: I don't know.

Q20: *You're 36 now. What have you learned about yourself over the years?*

BOUTELLA: All sorts of things. I shape myself every day. I learned that I have courage. There isn't a day that I don't realize where I came from and what I get to do today. I've just been invited to be a member of the Academy, which is insane. I feel blessed with life. If I tried to do in Algeria what I'm doing now—if there wasn't a civil war and my mom wanted to stay—it would be really difficult for me to exercise my art. I feel very grateful. 🙌



PLAYMATE

UNTAMED HEART

SHOT ON LOCATION AT **CASA DE CARLO**

WORDS BY **A.M. PAMANDANAN**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **OWEN REYES**

MAKEUP BY MAY ALMAZAN

STYLING BY OLIE PABUSTAN





MISS DECEMBER ARA PARAISO IS AS FIERCE AS THEY COME. WHEN SHE SETS AN
EYE ON HER PREY – BE IT A CAREER-RELATED PURSUIT OR ANY RANDOM THING
THAT CATCHES HER FANCY – SHE ALWAYS GOES IN FOR THE KILL.



“I’VE ALWAYS BEEN A BIT AGGRESSIVE WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT I LIKE, AND A LACK OF FORMAL TRAINING HAS NEVER STOPPED ME,” SAYS ARA. “I’M BIG ON SELF-LEARNING SO THAT’S WHAT ALLOWED AND ENCOURAGED ME TO GO AFTER WHAT I WANT.”

At first glance, our Miss December embodies everything we love about the Spanish race. Owner to a tiny face housing large features with doe-shaped eyes that glint with a hint of mischief, the Spanish-Pinay beauty is sure to set men afire with her passionate nature and joie de vivre. At 5’5, Ara Paraiso stands a few inches above the normal Asian female, and boasts of generous curves that can’t help but invite the eye to take its fill. Her 32-23-29 figure is all woman, even as her face displays the shy, wide-eyed look of a child. Her physical aspects, however, captivating as they are, is just the icing on top of a delicious dessert. This Castilian cracker is a multifaceted go-getter with a passion for life and self-learning.

From a tender age, Ara’s face has already invited attention. “I fell into the modeling industry when I was a junior in high school. The school held a beauty pageant that I participated in, and from there, my love for modeling grew,” she shares. “I did everything I could that first year – photoshoots, ramp – I wanted to do it all.” Even as an upstart back then, our Libran princess already showed glimpses of the drive that would define her as a professional.

“I’ve always been a bit aggressive when it comes to what I like, and a lack of formal training has never stopped me,” says Ara. “I’m big on self-learning so that’s what allowed and encouraged me to go after what I want.” And this powerhouse of a woman truly

encompasses the phrase “Anything is possible!” She’s taught herself how to play the guitar via YouTube, familiarized herself with the technical aspects of working behind the camera, dabbled in Photoshop, and learned how to speak the Korean language.

With a wide array of interests and an inquisitive nature, it’s no wonder that this vivacious vixen faces each day with an excitement and pleasure that the rest of us often neglect. “Every day is a new beginning and each day is different from the last,” she tells me. “*Iba-iba talaga ginagawa ko daily*, so I don’t really get bored. I let my days surprise me!” This willingness to be flexible with her schedule will serve her well in the industry, and it is an industry that she is determined to carve a future in.

“I’m focusing on my modeling right now, but I’m interested in doing far more in the business,” she tells me with a nonchalance few others would feel. “Performing is the end goal – whether I’m modeling, singing, or acting.” Is it any wonder, then, that she’s already done commercials and print ads for big brand names such as Shell, Pepsi, and Signal TV?

With her angelic looks – her face puts you in mind of ingénues Erich Gonzales and Liza Soberano, yet her body is all forest nymph – a voice that will make any Carpenters fan swoon, and a make-it-til-you-break-it attitude, we’re sure that the assiduous Ara Paraiso will soon set her trail ablaze with accomplishments and accolades that will impress even the most ambitious of people. 📸













*“Every day is a new beginning and each
day is different from the last.”*



FEATURE

A stylized, high-contrast portrait of a woman with long, light-colored hair, wearing a dark, low-cut top. The image is rendered in a graphic, almost stencil-like style with a limited color palette of pinks, purples, and greys. The woman's expression is neutral, and she is looking directly at the viewer.

THE QUEEN OF THE RING

BY **DUANE LUCAS PASCUA**

Ronda Rousey helped make mixed martial arts the global phenomenon that it is today and gave women who are in touch with their aggressive side a viable career to pursue. Any ring that she decides to step foot in becomes her palace.

More than a decade ago, I was in an old dilapidated sports center outside Manila, waiting behind a curtain for the ring announcer to call my name. The loud buzzing of the crowd was drowned out by the sound of my entrance music, “Enae Volare Mezzo,” the entrance theme of my favorite MMA fighter, Fedor Emelianenko. I stepped out of the curtain with sheer excitement in my eyes, feeling like a champ.

And yet nobody cared. Not even a tiny applause. The crowd was dimly thin— not the kind you see in major MMA events today. Not even close. The ones in attendance were mostly the entourage of other fighters in the card and/or a couple of bystanders who didn’t have anything better to do on a Wednesday night.

Basically, this was a microcosm of the state of MMA more than a decade ago. You have a small crowd of people who are into violence and competition, casual observers who would watch in passing, and a handful of practitioners who are hardcore followers of the sport. The so-called “fans” (clad in an MMA T-shirt and beer bottle in hand) wouldn’t even know who Fedor Emelianenko is and would always mistake MMA for the UFC (“oh you do UFC, right?”). You don’t hear about it in the evening news nor does it come up in social conversations.

Flash-forward to 2014, there came a shift in the paradigm between MMA and the mainstream media. For some reason, I started hearing and reading about some genuine outsider interest in the MMA world. My eyes would widen when people in bars and smoking areas start taking about arm locks and leg kicks. I started seeing kids play-fighting in the streets mimicking arm bars and Judo throws. For some reason, MMA was starting to creep its way in the general public’s psyche. The reason behind all this—with a few reservations—can be attributed to just one person.

That person is none other than “Rowdy” Ronda Rousey.

The former UFC Bantamweight Champion and current WWE Champion’s historic rise to the top of the world broke numerous conventions and changed not just the face of combat sports, but also the world’s perception of equality. So let’s have a look at the iconic— albeit complicated— journey of Ronda Rousey and why she just might be the most important athlete of the 21st Century.

She Broke The Stigma

Setting aside all the flaws, controversies, and heartbreaking losses, Ronda would always be the first female fighter to break the mold that has rendered female professional fighting in an indefinite coma for decades.

How? Her lethal combination of skills and looks convinced the UFC—an adamant detractor of women’s MMA at the time—that she can be marketable. And boy did she become a marketing cash cow after that. It sounds wrong to point out that her looks—not just her skills—got her into the dance but think about the large pool of talented female fighters in history and name one who has graced the cover of lifestyle magazines, signed Hollywood deals, and still kicked major ass in the ring. That’s right. Zero.

The point is, for the longest time, our predominantly paternalistic

society has been in the fence about paying tickets to watch a beautiful lady getting socked in the face and breaking limbs in the ring. People never completely accepted the fact that women can fight too. There’s a reason why all-time greats like Leila Ali and Lucia Rijker and Holly Holm and Ann Wolf never got their names mentioned outside fight circles and small, niche fanbases.

The former Olympic judoka became an anomaly in the system—a pretty woman who can destroy people in the ring. What was considered as something that can only be seen in movies and fantasy fiction came to life, and people’s perception of the term “fight like a girl” has been changed—for good.

Fighting has always been an aggressively male sport. Ronda—with all her palpable intensity and superstar appeal—changed all that. Sure, she’s neither the first female to kick ass in combat sports nor the best to ever do it, but what her short fighting career achieved paved way for future female fighters to be appreciated in the highest level—just as much as their male contemporaries. And, by extension, this change has rippled out into other sports and furthermore, into the world. Equality has become more and more apparent thanks to Ronda’s shining emblem that casted a light on an inherent truth that we’ve been refusing to realize for the longest time.

She Made Fighting Human Again

Professional fighting is a world—save for a few exceptions like Muhammad Ali and a few anti-heroic heels—that still demands superhuman conduct, humility, and a certain level of stoicism from its practitioners and especially its champions. When Ronda broke into the scene and won the UFC Bantamweight Title, she turned this concept on its head by simply being herself.

Her thuggish, unsportsmanlike conduct towards her rivals, her sporadically ballooned ego, her emotional outbursts, and her low-hanging tear ducts were previously unacceptable traits that aren’t befitting a champion. But to the uninitiated who don’t have a

real understanding of what goes on in a Mixed Martial Arts bout, this largely imperfect humanity trapped inside a beautifully sculpted ass-kicker introduces a wildly different view of a brutal sport like no one’s ever seen before. All of a sudden, professional fighting is no longer the hyper-masculine, tattoo-laden sport that it largely was—it has become a complex drama of humane narrative where brilliant but deeply flawed individuals put their fragile minds and bodies on the line for the prize of achieving greatness.

Simply put, Ronda made fighting accessible to everyone—simply by making it look unapologetically human to the eyes of its spectators.

Now, as she has entered and became world champion in the realm of theatrical fighting, the WWE, she looks to bring the same impact to sports entertainment with her natural flair as well as the realism she brings to the table as a former MMA champion, and has been largely successful so far. Her debuting year has been hailed by wrestling pundits as one of the best of all time regardless of gender, and her having a hall of fame career before she decides to hang up her boots is almost a certainty at this point. We could only see even greater things ahead for the feisty grappler.

And so from being a trailblazer for women in the UFC, professional fighting and sports in general, it’s in this writer’s belief that Rowdy’s fight for the flawed humanity in MMA would be the finest trophy in her already-legendary legacy. And yes, this is the reason why Ronda Rousey IS the most important athlete of the 21st century. **W**



MISS SOCIAL

Janine

BREAKING THROUGH

WORDS BY
PAUL WENCESLAO

PLAYMATE JANINE HOLDS NOTHING BACK WHEN SHE GOES FOR
THE THINGS THAT SHE WANTS. BRACE YOURSELF. THERE'S A
SULTRY STORM COMING THROUGH.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **OWEN REYES**

A full-page photograph of a woman with long, wavy brown hair sitting on a sandy beach. She is looking directly at the camera with a soft expression. Her hands are resting on her arms, and she is wearing a light blue bikini top. The background features a large, textured tree trunk and the sand of the beach. The lighting is warm and natural, creating soft shadows.

MAKE UP BY
LINKEE COUSNARD

AND
MAY ALMAZAN

STYLING BY
OLIE PABUSTAN

SHOT ON LOCATION AT
CORON, PALAWAN

“I’m still the same person, but I became more mature in a lot of ways.”

What a difference a year makes. Early last year, a gorgeous 19-year-old walked in the PLAYBOY Philippines office and immediately snagged everyone’s attention in the way a head-turner instantly makes any man weak in the knees. She might get overcome with fear when faced with an interviewer, but in front of our photographers’ cameras, she was an absolute star.

A year after, prior to competing for Playmate of the Year, Janine broke out of her shell and exhibited wisdom well beyond her years. The insecurity that she had with her body and sense of self was virtually extinguished, to be replaced by a fierceness that registers as a fascinating mix of sexiness, seduction, and a magnetizing presence. It’s no wonder that she became the first Playmate of the Year finalist for 2018.

“I didn’t really change who I am between last year and the time I became a Playmate of the Year contender,” she says in Filipino. “I’m still the same person, but I became more mature in a lot of ways. It did help that there are people around me who helped me grow. I discovered new skills like singing and dancing. I’m even trying out pole dancing right now.”

Aside from her mesmerizing looks, another asset that Janine possesses is loyalty – whether with PLAYBOY or the people she holds dear. After the competition, she intends to help out the company’s talent department in shaping younger models into becoming sexy and sophisticated individuals in a holistic sense. Outside of work, her driving force to improve and become the captivating beauty that we all know of is the person she loves the most.

“I am a single mom, and I dedicate everything that I do to my child,” she reveals. “My advocacy is to empower young single moms. A lot of people look down on them and discriminate against them. It doesn’t mean that if you’re a single mom, you can do less work or you’re any less attractive. I’m here to say that single moms are stronger than the average person.” 📌









This strength that Janine has shown translates to her very definition of sexiness, and it shows, especially upon joining the Playmate of the Year competition.

“Confidence is truly the source of one’s sexiness. It doesn’t matter if you have a big butt, big boobs or a nice body. If you are not confident, it would be hard to look great in photos. On the other hand, if you believe that you’re sexy, even if you’re chubby, you would look amazing.”

And look amazing she did in her Playmate of the Year shoot in Coron, as everyone can see. Janine laid on the sand – doing away with both her clothing and all the inhibitions that she had previously held – channeled her inner goddess, and gave us more than what we can handle. Each image amounts to a tale of overcoming one’s fears and the things that hold a person back, only to come out on top as a newfound empress in one’s own world. She could gladly rule over us. 🙌



Rob

LIVEWIRE

WORDS BY
JOANE GIVERTZ



THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

PLAYMATE ROB IS A LIVING, BREATHING FIRECRACKER – JUST
AS HOT AND MESMERIZING AS THE TINY BOLTS OF FIRE THAT
DEFINE VICTORY IN CELEBRATIONS.







*"I do not want to be just
another Playmate who
is sexy. I want to be
the kind of person who
helps those in need."*

“I will still be here. I was lucky enough to be a Playmate of the Year contender – that in itself feels like I already won. I am very grateful to everyone that has helped me get this far.”

Back when Playmate of the Year 2018 contender Rob Guinto first appeared in the magazine in early 2017, it was more like catching lightning in a bottle as she charmed readers with a bit of spunk and loads of sex appeal seeping out of a largely reserved shell. More than a year after, we uncorked that bottle and she sizzled like a livewire in photos and on social media, easily earning her a spot in the Playmate of the Year competition.

With long dark hair that cascades down to just below her supple breasts, a tiny waist that flares to a mind-numbing derriere, and legs so long and shapely, it is no wonder that Rob won the online poll for Playmate of the Year. Moreover, aside from her obvious good looks, she displays a depth to her that only adds to her appeal.

“Having a good body is not enough. If a woman wants to be sexy, she has to have a good personality as well,” she explains in Taglish.

True to her words, Rob is a woman of substance. Her traditional, yet flexible values as a woman makes her the epitome of Filipina beauty.

She continues, “I do not want to be just another Playmate who is sexy. I want to be the kind of person who helps those in need. Sexiness is not all we are, we can help people – and if I win Playmate of

the Year, that is just what I’ll do.”

Beautiful and kind, Rob has the qualities of becoming anyone’s dream girl. But what kind of man does this firecracker of a woman want, you ask? According to her, you have to be funny, fun to be with, and loyal. “I like my men simple. I am not really one for looks, but there really is nothing sexier than a man with good hygiene.”

If you have all the said qualities, you may have a shot with the beautiful Ms. Guinto. But there is more: If you want to ask her out, you have to get to know her first. She has to be comfortable with you before you ask her out on a date.

“As a girlfriend, I’m loyal and I’m not very strict. As long as you update me, we’re good,” she says, before alluding to a winning reward for a guy who is man enough to tame her. “I’m quite good at twerking! And not just in dancing, if you know what I mean,” she jokes.

With the Playmate of the Year competition behind her, Rob remains grateful to PLAYBOY and is optimistic that her career will continue to flourish from this point forward. She says, “I will still be here. I was lucky enough to be a Playmate of the Year contender – that in itself feels like I already won. I am very grateful to everyone that has helped me get this far.” And she intends to continue fighting for her advocacy, which is to empower women. Nothing can hold this woman down. 





FICTION

SHARK FIN DINNER PARTY

FICTION BY **LING MA**

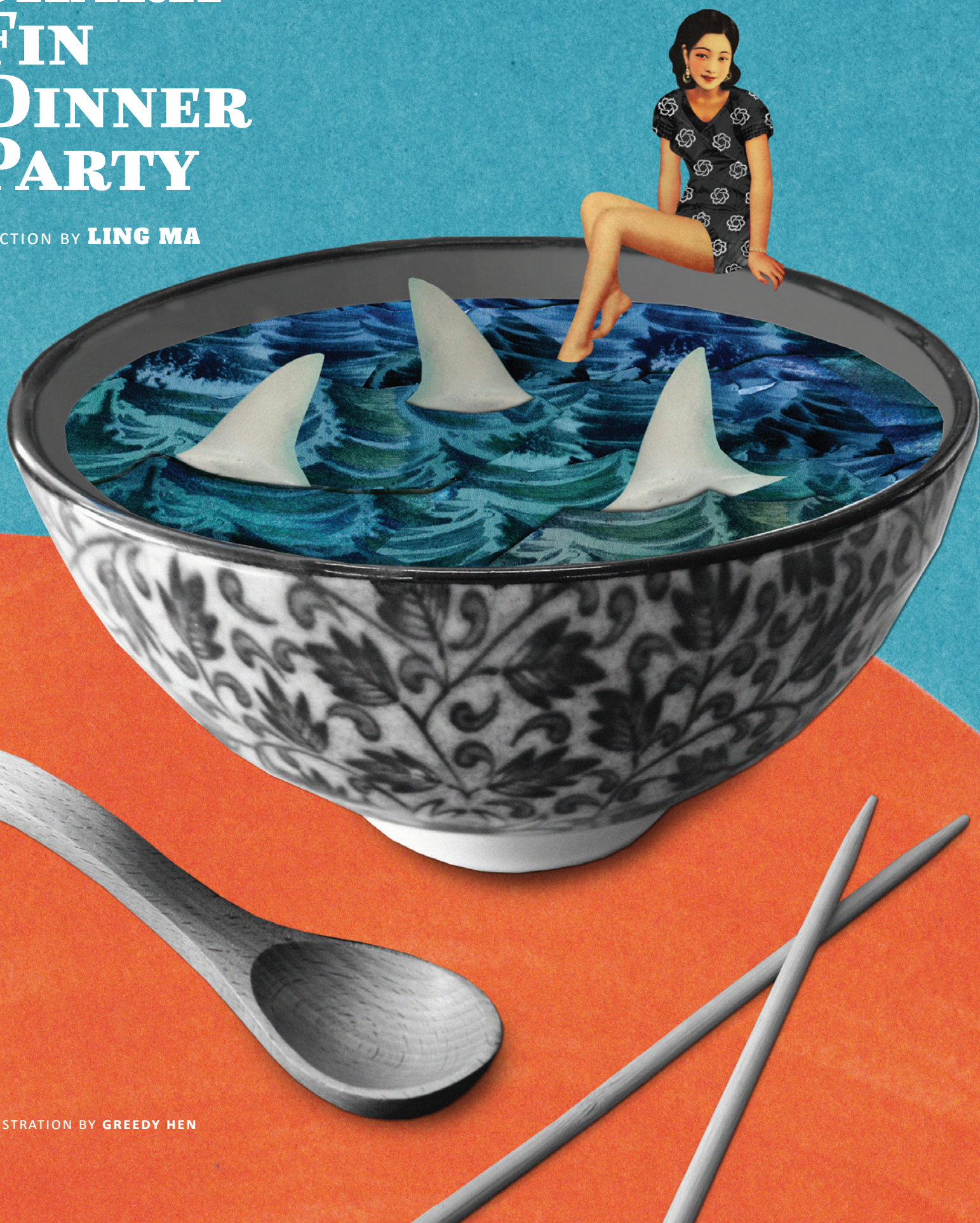


ILLUSTRATION BY **GREEDY HEN**

The shark fin dinner party took place on a cold, rainy Saturday night in late August. It marked the end of that strange transitory summer and the beginning of something else.

The guests consisted of a mix of college friends and Jane's people, co-workers and neighbors. They crowded into our railroad apartment, guys in skinny ties and suits, girls with big Aqua Net hair and acrylic nails. They piled their coats on our beds, rolled a keg up the stairs, brought little hostess gifts. Giorgio Moroder played in the background. Someone came dressed as Ronald Reagan, pelting girls with jelly beans from his suit pocket.

We'd created a makeshift Trump-themed dining table in our living room by arranging collapsible card tables end to end. Over this Jane had laid a metallic gold tablecloth, weighted by a thrifted brass candelabra, and bouquets of fake plastic flowers she'd spray-painted gold. On the table were ironic predinner canapes: salmon mousse quenelles with dill cream, spinach dip in a bread bowl, Ritz crackers and a ball of pimento cheese in the shape of Trump's hair.

I navigated through the rooms in one of my mother's loose, billowy Contempo Casuals dresses, this one black with a white burn-out African print.

In the midst of this fray was Steven Reitman, dressed as if for a Hamptons boating party, standing amongst the secondhand furniture of my bedroom. I had invited him almost as a joke, considering that we hadn't seen each other all summer, so I hadn't actually expected him to come.

Is this a dinner party or a costume party? he asked, pressing his whiskered cheek to mine in an air kiss. The scent of his expensive yuzu aftershave made me suddenly wistful for the few times we'd spent together. I swallowed.

You don't need an '80s costume, I said. You can say you're here for research, observing millennials in their natural habitat. I sat down on the edge of my bed, pushing aside the mountain of jackets.

So you invited me to be the party ethnographer? Should've brought my notebook. He sat down beside me, crossing his legs, exposing ankle sock. The bed sagged.

I shrugged and sipped from my rum and Coke. The dim light from the nightstand lamp dramatized our expressions.

How have you been? Sitting very close, he spoke in a low, conspiratorial tone, intimating an intimacy that we never really shared. I noticed that his sports jacket featured a Liberty floral pocket square that someone else, another girl, I assumed, must've helped him choose. No way would he have chosen it on his own.

How's the postcollege job market looking? he pressed.

I don't know. I've been focusing more on, I guess, personal projects.

Well, the reason I ask is—he reached into his back pocket—I didn't come empty-hand-

ed. He opened his wallet. For a moment I was afraid he was going to hand me cash, but it was something else, a business card. It read, MICHAEL REITMAN, CEO.

It's my brother's company, Steven explained. There's a position open. Give him a call. You told your brother about me? I studied the card uncertainly, trying to make out the letters in the low light. What's Spectrum?

Spectra, he corrected. They're a publishing consulting firm that handles book production. It's not art or design, but it's something. They're looking to fill an assistant position. My brother will have more details, if you get in touch.

I studied the card again, avoiding Steven's gaze. I didn't need a job right away, but I needed *something*, a point of entry into another life that wasn't just about milling around, walking. I could feel my parents' disapproval hanging over me. I was embarrassed that Steven had sensed what I needed.

Thank you, I finally said. But you didn't have to.

It's nothing. I just mentioned you. Now he looked embarrassed.

I know we're not—

Dinner is ready! Jane clamored through the rooms, gathering guests up.

You go ahead, I told Steven. I'll be right in.

He stood up. Okay. I'll see you in there?

I smiled reassuringly. When he left the room, I closed the door. Then, I crawled to the head of my bed, over the mountain of jackets, where I opened the window and climbed out onto the fire escape. The tinny, collapsible structure winced. The air outside was cool and humid. Tiny pinpricks of rain dotted my arms.

The fire escape looked out on the backs of other apartment buildings and a communal garden that all the ground-level tenants shared, its disorganized, uncultivated plots overrun with ghetto palms and raffish vegetation; a dash of wildflowers here, a fledgling fruit tree there.

I sat down. A full minute elapsed before I started crying. Or more like a shallow, panicky mouth breathing, dry and sobless. I tried to focus my breath, steady it, in and out, like breaststrokes in deep, choppy water.

Hey, you're blocking all the rain.

The voice came from below. I looked down. Through the grating, I saw a guy sitting on his window ledge, reading a book, smoking a cigarette. He was the summer subletter downstairs. I'd seen him at the mailboxes.

Sorry, I said automatically.

He looked up, smiled impishly. No sorry. Just giving you a hard time.

I'm getting some air, I explained unnecessarily.

Okay. He blew out a lungful of smoke. Fire escape is all yours. Do you mind if I just finish this first?

I considered the top of his head. Can I have one?

Sure. Then, after a pause, Should I come up? I looked into my empty room. I could

hear Jane still rallying everyone to the table. I'll just come down.

The fire escape rattled beneath my feet. He helped me down the last steps, where, at the landing, I extended my hand. He had a surprisingly firm grip, given his thin, boyish frame. There was a sadness to his face, dark circles under his blue eyes.

He asked, Do you want to wait here or come inside while I get you one?

I peeked inside his window. Is this your room?

Yes. He hesitated. Would you like to come in?

I climbed in and looked around. He lived in the room directly below mine. It was the same room—our apartments shared the same floor plan—except cleaner, better. My room was messy, cluttered with too many things. His room was clean and ascetic, bare walls dimly lit by a floor lamp. There was something serene about it, a temple emptied of all ceremonial accoutrements and cleared of incense smoke.

I live right above you, I informed him.

I know. I can hear you walking late at night. You pace. He caught himself. Sorry, I don't mean to sound creepy. You just have this skittish way of walking.

A skittish way of walking?

Like, restless. I hear your roommate too. She gets up very early. I can hear her grinding coffee.

Does she not have a skittish way of walking?

He contemplated this. Um, no. Your roommate walks very purposefully, but you, you're more unsettled, unsure. Not an insult, just an observation. He had found his pack of American Spirits and handed one to me, not touching the filter. I liked that consideration. I rolled it around between my fingers. My roommate gets up early, I allowed. It's a long commute. She has this fashion PR job in Jersey.

Here, sit down. I can't find my light. Let me get one from the kitchen.

I sat down on the edge of the bed. It was a mattress on the floor, carefully dressed with white sheets. There was no chair. Affixed on the walls were two plastic hooks, one for a towel and the other for a jacket next to the door frame. In lieu of a dresser, clothes were neatly stacked in three rows on the floor against the wall: jeans, underwear and white T-shirts. A small floor lamp was arranged next to a few library books. Rousseau. Foucault.

When he returned, he was holding the largest butane lighter I'd ever seen. May I? he asked.

I nodded, and he attempted to light my cigarette, ridiculously, the gas flame licking my cheek.

Should we go back outside? I don't want to smoke up your room.

No, stay. Smoke up my room. He sat down on the bed. We smoked. He seemed content to say nothing.

So, I said, searching. Tell me about what you do. I regretted it as soon as I asked. It was the question everyone asked everyone else in New York, so careerist, so boring.

What I do for money or what I actually do?

Both, I guess. I exhaled a plume of smoke.

I temp for money, usually copywriting jobs. I freelance a bit too, a few articles and interviews. But what I actually do is write fiction. And you, what about you?

I live off my parents, I said, surprised by the casualness with which I dispensed this information. I didn't elaborate that they were both deceased, and that the family coffers or whatever would last me just long enough—maybe, say, for the next 10, 15 years—for me to be comfortable with not working, long enough to be useless. The fruits of my immigrant father's lifelong efforts would be gobbled up and squandered by me, his lazy, disaffected daughter.

But I'm looking for a job, I added. I have an interview coming up at this place called Spectra.

What are you interviewing for?

dry and tight; I'd probably forgotten to moisturize. I threw some water on my face.

When I opened the door, he was waiting in the hallway. Together, we entered my apartment the same way I had left it: up the fire escape, through my window and into my room. We walked into the living room, to a dinner that had just begun. Everyone looked up.

Who's this? Jane asked.

This is, um—— I turned to him, realizing we'd never introduced ourselves.

Jonathan, he said.

Jonathan, I repeated. He's our downstairs neighbor.

Can I get you something to drink, Jonathan? Jane said. If she was annoyed by our lateness, she didn't show it. We have kamikazes, rum and Cokes, anything.

Just seltzer water if you have any.

I'll get it, I said, walking to the kitchen while Jane pulled up an extra chair for him, clear across the other end of the table, while I was seated next to Steven.

Once we were all seated, we beheld the magnum opus at the center of the table: The

man. Or something like that.

And you're not a fair man? I asked Steven.

A *family* man, Steven corrected, slurring. My brother has always been a family man. Whereas I have only performed at it. And badly.

I realized he was addressing his divorce, the emotional repercussions he must have been struggling with. He'd never spoken of his family, and whatever information I'd gleaned was vague and clichéd: the distant wife, the troubled children.

You're fine, I said. You're okay. Nothing bad is happening right now.

He smiled, eyes bloodshot, and spooned his soup.

Suddenly, I felt a bit nauseated. It was so hot and smoky and perfumed inside.

In keeping with the vaguely Orientalist theme, Jane had bought a mah-jongg set that we were all supposed to play after dinner, but no one could figure out the game.

Candace, I thought you knew how to play this, someone yelled at me.

Why, because I'm Asian?

We gave up. We disassembled the card

The alarm broke a spell;

Um, I have no idea.

He smiled, as if to himself. By this point, my cigarette had gone out. I hesitated. There's a party that I'm supposed to be hosting.

What, now? He started.

I nodded. They've probably begun without me. You're invited, if you'd like.

I'll walk you up at least. He stood up and came over to me. I thought he was going to pull me up, but instead, he licked his thumb and touched my cheeks. I realized that he was clearing off dried streaks of mascara. I'd forgotten that only moments earlier, I'd been crying.

I'm going to pretend you're not cleaning me with your spit. I closed my eyes. Is it coming off?

No. You might have to use my bathroom.

Can I use your bathroom?

Sure. It's down the—actually, you know where it is.

I walked to where my bathroom would have been. The bathroom was also tidy, unlike our space, full of generic Duane Reade products lined up in his medicine cabinet, which I opened to look for prescription pill bottles. There weren't any. I couldn't see his private grievances.

I closed the cabinet and looked at myself in the mirror. My private grievances were all over my face. I looked upset. My skin looked

shark fin soup was arranged in a crystal punch bowl with a ladle, prom-style. Actually, two punch bowls. One for the original soup, and another for the mysterious vegan version that Jane had made.

Jane served all of us, ladling it out into bowls.

The shark fin had a strange, gelatinous texture. We chewed for a long time, then swished the soup down with red wine.

I should've bought white, Jane said. Better with seafood.

The tannins, someone agreed.

It's not bad, Jonathan said, and really seemed to mean it.

The rest of us forced the soup down our throats. Jane passed around a glass candy dish full of oyster crackers, which guests sprinkled in their bowls. It didn't make the soup any more palatable, any less sour or musty. I wondered if I'd made it wrong. The recipe had called for fresh shark fins. Instead, I had soaked the dried fins in filtered water for a few hours, to reconstitute them, before I'd made the soup. Aside from that, I had followed the recipe precisely.

I guzzled more wine than I could handle. Steven turned to me, his low voice forcing me to lean a little closer. He was saying something about his brother; how his brother was a better man than he because he was a fair

man. Or something like that. tables that made up our dining table and moved them out into the hallway. The living room was cleared.

Suddenly, the sound of the fire alarm cut through the room. Everyone winced, covered their ears against the shrill electronic shriek.

What's burning? someone asked. I don't smell anything.

It's all the cigarette smoke, another person yelled.

Shit. Well, crack a window.

Should we stop smoking? a girl asked, her hand frozen, clutching her cigarette.

Jane waved her hand. Guys! Just dismantle the alarm! She climbed a kitchen chair to the smoke alarm on the ceiling, located the battery hatch and removed it.

The alarm had broken a spell. Afterward, everyone began to relax. We hooked up an iPod to the speakers and took turns deejaying. People jumped around in unison, a faux mosh pit. With happy, sunny pop music. In the kitchen, others played a drinking game called Bullshit Pyramid. Someone else had brought Twister, and the mat was laid out in the middle of my room. I wandered from room to room, circulating, playing at everything and losing, laughing hysterically as I scattered the cards, stumbled on The alarm broke a spell; 145 the mat, jumped up and down, out of sync.

When other people are happy, I don't have to worry about them. There is room for my happiness. In this happiness, I lost track of Jane. I lost track of Steven. I lost track of Jonathan. I had seen him talking to a bunch of people as they sat around on the floor. Later still, through a curtain of smoke, I saw him in my room, looking through my bookcase. Those books aren't mine! I wanted to yell, even though that was not true. They were all mine. *My Antonia*. *Windowlight*. *Namedrop-er*. *Crime and Punishment*, the one thing I saved from freshman English. *The Metamorphosis*. *The Sweet Valley High* series, paperbacks of teen horror and sci-fi that I had pilfered from visits back home. Christopher Pike. R.L. Stine. Coming-of-agers. *I Capture the Castle*. The Mysteries of Pittsburgh. A collection of defunct magazines from the '90s, *Index* being my favorite. How long had he been in there? And even later, I glimpsed him in Jane's room, watching some Italian movie on a laptop with a group of people, the loud exclamatory Italian phrases like typewriter keys clacking. *Come stai?* What was there to do but smile. I smiled and waved. Come join

amorousness. But no, he was not just drunk. Something else. He had ingested something, it was so clear that he had ingested something. Maybe he had taken it willingly, or maybe someone had slipped it to him as a joke. My friends could be assholes.

Steven was touching my face, his eyes glassy. You look so sad, he said. I'm not sad, I replied. Are you having a good time?

You're so beautiful, he said, not answering me. You're really beautiful, he repeated.

Thank you, I said maturely. Would you like me to call you a cab?

He shook his head vigorously. No. I want to stay.

Okay, you can stay. But why don't you lie down. I led him to the living room, toward the sofa. I was removing his shoes, attempting to unknot his gray leather shoelaces, so fine, like mouse whiskers.

No. I want to say something. I want to tell you something, he said urgently.

What's that?

He took my face in his hands and looked at me. I am alone, Steven said. I am without family, I am alone.

resses. I kissed him back. Through the yuzu aftershave, I could remember what it was like to kiss him, at the beginning of the summer, when he first took me over to his loft. I went around, looking at his things, his books, the framed art on the walls, his furniture that he'd paid someone to arrange. I opened up his bathroom cabinet and sniffed his collection of aftershaves. I opened up his closet and looked at his wood hangers and shoe trees. He got off on my curiosity. When I kissed him, it was like I was kissing all his things, all the signifiers and trappings of adulthood or success coming at me in a rush. Fucking was just seeing that to its end, a white yacht docking.

Now Steven was the one to disentangle himself. Hold on. Let's go to your room.

We walked to my room, to the very end of the railroad, where I saw Jonathan. He was sitting on the edge of the bed, fully dressed, reading. My heart dropped. As we came into the room, he looked up at Steven and me, putting two and two together. What was there for me to do but smile and try not to look too disgusting.

everyone began to relax.

us, he yelled after me as I went down the hallway to do something else, I forget what. After that, I didn't see him and I figured he had probably gone back downstairs, through the fire escape of my room.

I don't know how many hours passed. I stopped and started. When I was tired, I sprawled out on the rug. When I was hungry, I nibbled on chips in the kitchen. I drank Sprite and wine coolers I found in the fridge. I was like a homeless person in my own house.

I was enjoying myself, but it was an insulated enjoyment. I was alone inside of it. Around four, the party began to wind down. The sky had begun to lighten outside the window. Guests were gradually leaving, one by one or in groups, peeling themselves off the rug of our living room, where we hovered, drinking and passing a spliff. Jane was sleeping on the floor. The mountain of coats and jackets on my bed diminished until only a few remained. I identified Steven's sports coat, which he had taken off sometime during the night. It was missing its pocket square.

I picked it up and walked through the apartment.

Steven? I called.

I found him in the bathroom, gripping the sink. He had sweat through his shirt. He was utterly, swervingly drunk, and with that drunkenness came complete, terrorizing

You're not alone, I said, though I did not know this to be a fact. And, because I was not close enough to him to tell him the truth, I added, You have people all around you. You're on TV.

I missed you, he persisted.

You have people, I repeated, not knowing what else to say.

No, you're not hearing me. You're not hearing me even though you understand. I missed you. All summer, I kept thinking about you.

Is that why you came? I asked, thinking of the times he had deflected my IMs, the times I had deflected his.

He looked at me. You invited me. Why did you invite me?

I didn't answer this. Instead, I said, A lot has changed for me this summer.

Like what? He was grabbing my wrists. How are you different? You look the same. Exactly the same.

He lurched toward me. I pulled back. Undeterred, he lunged again and attempted to kiss me, madly, desperately. When I pulled back again, he came crashing to the floor, dragging me down with him. Jane, lying on the rug a few feet away, didn't stir. With the both of us lying low, he started kissing me. It was like tumbling down a dizzying Escher staircase of beer-tasting embraces and ca-

I was just leaving. Jonathan stood up and went to the window. I followed him, to close the window after him. When he pulled himself out on the fire escape, he turned around, his face half concealed by shadows.

Come downstairs and see me sometime, he said.

I will. Good night, I said, and as I turned away to go, his hand grabbed my arm.

Candace.

I smiled. Jonathan. What?

He leaned over and whispered in my ear. You're making a mistake. Then, before I could react, he licked my ear. With the tip of his tidy, scratchy tongue, he grazed the bottom of the lobe to the tip of the ear, in one stealth swoop.

I stepped back, grabbing my ear with both hands as if someone had cut it off. It was warm, and wet.

With that, he closed my window and descended the fire escape. I heard the fragile, thin metal clanging as he climbed down. I heard his window opening. Then I heard it close.

From the novel Severance by Ling Ma, from Farrar, Straus and Giroux.





PLAYMATE UPDATE

PLAYMATE ROB VISITS THE STREET KIDS AT ROXAS BOULEVARD

While taking a break from the Playmate of the Year competition, Playmate Rob took the time to give food to the kids and poor families who consider the sidewalks of Roxas Boulevard as a home. She also gave words of encouragement to the kids for them to follow their dreams and not lose hope on life despite their living condition. The young model was a beacon of hope to these people.



PLAYMATE JANINE PROVIDES RELIEF GOODS TO THE KIDS AT CABAYUNAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Playmate Janine, along with FJ Cruiser Trail Teams Philippines, risked life and limb as she went on an arduous four-hour trek to Cabayunan Elementary School to give the students food, some wise words, and a bit of leisure to help alleviate the harsh conditions of life. The kids were ecstatic when the Jollibee mascot made a surprise appearance.

It was a fulfilling experience for Janine, who brought her son to the trip so he can learn from the experiences of the kids and develop the heart to give to charity.



PLAYMATE MAINE CELEBRATES HER BIRTHDAY WITH CANCER PATIENTS

For Playmate Maine, what better way to celebrate her birthday than to spend it with the cancer patients of National Children's Hospital. She brought a smile to the kids' faces and got to know the hardships of dealing with a deadly disease. After which, she donated to the foundation and picked up her share of life lessons from the experience. It was a birthday celebration that she will never ever forget.





PLAYBOY NEWS



AN EXCITING PMOY MOCK ELECTIONS 2018 CAMPAIGN

The road to the 2018 Playmate of the Year (PMOY) title brought us to Chololos, a fancy gastropub at Greenhills Town Center in Quezon City. The PMOY contenders – Playmates Rob Guinto, Maine Eugenio, and Janine Rivera – rubbed elbows with distinguished guests and their respective fans, turning the oft-chill place into a vibrant party den.

Aside from mingling with the people, the three contenders also took turns in showcasing their singing skills as each of them performed with the bar's roster of featured musical acts. They also got up close and personal with the diners which earned them new friends, on-line followers, and most importantly – votes for the PMOY title.

Every Wednesday night last September was truly a momentous occasion, and the girls made sure that they brought the party to everyone in attendance.





RECALL

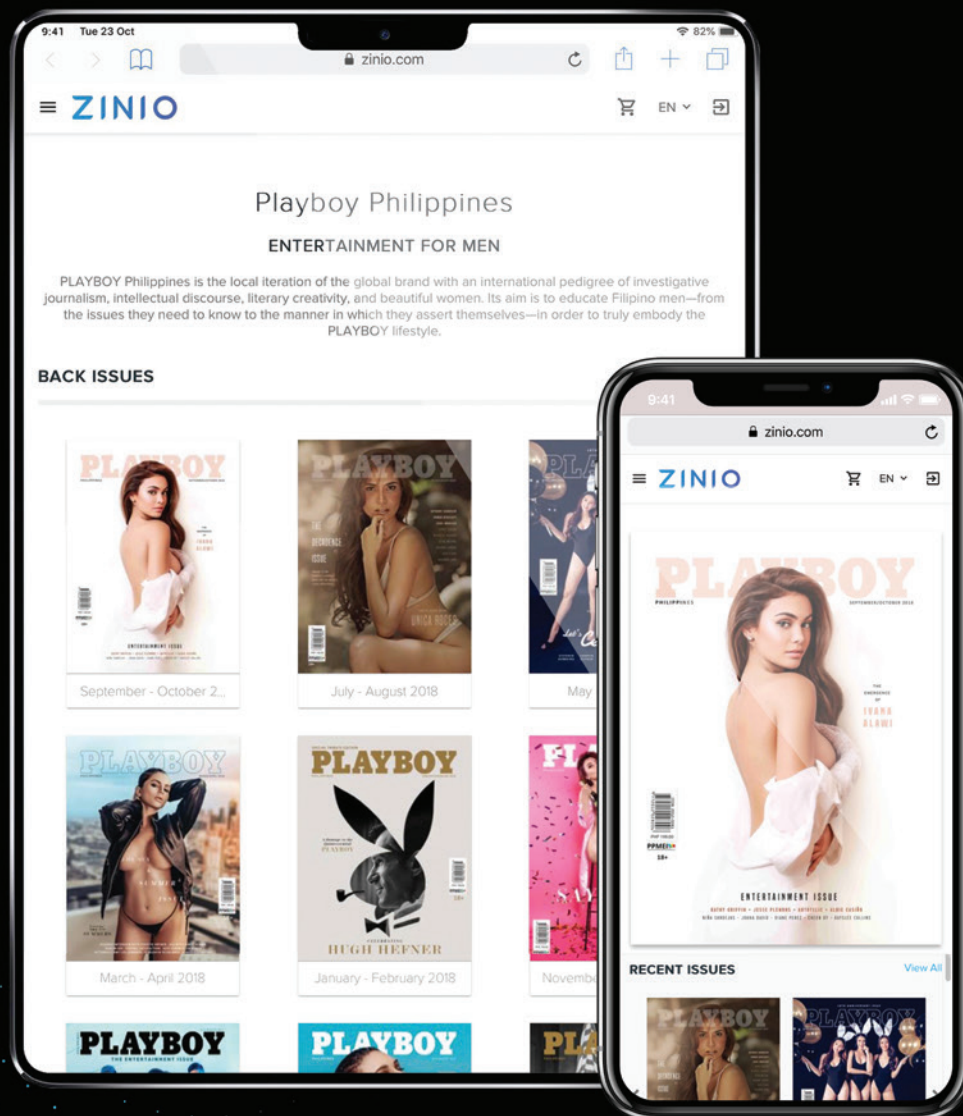


In 2008, a simple slender girl from Lubang Island in Mindoro entered the PLAYBOY office wanting to receive the opportunity to don the brand's iconic pair of bunny ears. Little did she know that the cute headpiece she eventually ended up wearing would turn into a tiara as she became the company's very first Playmate of the Year and the world's first Playmate of the Decade. Playmate Billy would be known as VP Billy Abeleda when she became vice president for operations and executive editor. She is a living example of how one grabbed opportunity that can turn into a life-changing experience. Hail to PLAYBOY Philippines' queen bunny!

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